GERHART HAUPTMANN

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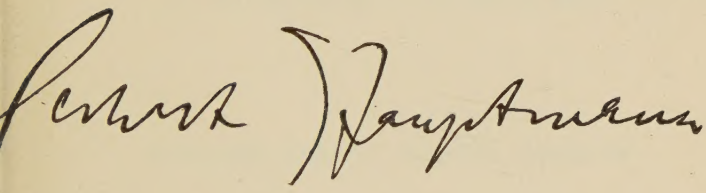

VOLUME EIGHT:

INDIPOHDI
THE WHITE SAVIOUR
A WINTER BALLAD

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
GERHART HAUPTMANN

(AUTHORIZED EDITION)

Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir

VOLUME EIGHT: POETIC DRAMAS

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NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH, INC.
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INDIPOHDI

A DRAMATIC POEM

FIRST ACT

Ruins of what might be an enormous Toltec palace on an island in the ocean. A wide landscape, dominated by the snowy peak of a volcano. Vegetation almost tropical in character surrounds the ruins. An arm of the sea is visible. In appearance the ruins resemble the Maya palace of Mitla. Broad and lofty steps lead up to three squarely cut entrances. The day is at the full, with a glaring sun. On the steps sit two Indian attendant priests, with blue-black plaits of hair woven round their heads: HUEMAC *and* MATZATZIN.

HUEMAC

The audience is long today, Matzatzin.
What is thy master's business with the Magus?

MATZATZIN

If I but knew! It can be that he urges
The sacrifice demanded by the people.

HUEMAC

The Magus never will revoke the edict
Against the offering up of young men.

MATZATZIN

Never?

HUEMAC

Never, I say it!

MATZATZIN

If the hollow thunder
Cease not within earth's bowels, and the mountain
Pour out an ever thicker cloud of vapour,
Betraying thus by signs more manifest
The anger of the golden heavenly Father,
May we not even then dare to appease him?

HUEMAC

His son, my lord the Magus, will appease him.

MATZATZIN

Dost thou believe he is divine and mighty?

HUEMAC

How canst thou question, when thy master Oro
Lies at the white lord's feet? Beware, Matzatzin.
He who blasphemes the stars must count the stars
Till he is driven to madness. With a stone
The moon will kill him who insults the moon.
And he who through his unbelief offends
The son of the sun, he will be struck with blindness.

MATZATZIN

I know.

HUEMAC

The Holy One rose from the sea:

Eleven circling years have closed their rounds
Since Tonatiu first set his holy foot
Heavy with blessing on our island shore,
Shaking the ocean from his golden hair.
Thus did he come, as promised by the scriptures,
The Lady of Heaven an infant in his arms.
That is the truth. What room is there for
doubting?

Matzatzin

I do not doubt at all. My master Oro
Has taught me this, and I must needs believe him.
Only, he says himself the noble Magus
Has never boasted of his heavenly birth,
Nor ever spoken word that could affirm it.

Huemac

And does this silence shake thy master's faith?

Matzatzin

No, but if keenly I observe his actions,
Or hearken with my inner ear to that
Which sounds behind his teaching, I am sure
The Magus has not quite revealed himself,
And Oro strives to comprehend a riddle.

Huemac

What is divine is ever mysterious
Even when near to us. It must be so.
The God must veil his head even from himself
Or else his fire would burn the priest to ashes;
The priest, when he conducts the sacrifice,
The holiest of all mysteries, must shelter

His countenance behind a temple-cloth.
We, the attendants, do the same in turn
When we must give responses in the litany
If only to the priest: for round his head
Reflected glory lingers.

Matzatzin

But my master,
The High Priest Oro, also is descended
From the great golden Lord of the Day-star.
Oro is of the same blood as the Magus:
Why need one veil himself before the other?

Huemac

Thou findest fault, it seems, with Tonatiu.

Matzatzin

Not so. 'Tis only that I love my master.

[Tehura, *a tall young Indian maiden, comes out of the ruined palace on to the terrace. She carries in her arms a living white rabbit with red eyes. Her hair falls blue-black and straight over her back and bosom.*

Huemac

There is Tehura, see, thy master's daughter.
Needs must the daughter be more closely bound
To her own father than thou art, and yet
She studies every gesture of the Magus
And follows wedded to him like his shadow.

Matzatzin

Come, let us hide ourselves more in the thicket.

How small I am, how ugly I am, O!
Far am I from blaspheming, but I ask
Why Tonatiu prevents us from the sacrifice,
From the time-honoured offering of young blood,
Hindering us from the blessed Way of Light?

Huemac

For years this wish has lurked within thy heart,
To give thyself as victim for atonement.
Towards that goal press many. For it means
Here upon earth one is to God uplifted,
The bowl of earthly bliss at one deep draught
Draining, and through death's portal treading
Crowned like a God, with clash of cymbals and
Music of flutes, a God to the Gods ascending.
How canst thou, son of a poor potter, hope
Ever to be deemed worthy of such honour
Before all others?

Matzatzin

Heaven can answer prayer,
And grant to him who wearies not in asking
All that he will, even after many years.

Huemac

There stands Tehura: how she glances hither
Smiling to know thy over-reaching thoughts.
The Moon-mother is her like. Duskily sweeps
The night about the pale light of her brow.
Maddening are the dimples in her cheeks.
Out of the sacred agate they are chiselled.
Black are her eyes, that see the world within
As well as that without. Her musing hand

Strokes the white softness of the sacred rabbit
She holds within her arm. No; not for us
This queen of darkling skies.

Matzatzin

Why sayest thou that?

Huemac

Because, when one is chosen for the sacrifice,
Thus honoured, he may have his dearest wish:
Even should he wish to have the High Priest's
daughter.

Tehura

Now, ye beplaited acolytes, what gossip
Exchange ye so importantly together?

[Huemac *and* Matzatzin *rise together. They stand with hanging heads, dumb.* Tehura *continues.*

Ye have been questioned. Why so silent? Speak!

Huemac

Illustrious lady, when the simple pupils
Discuss a matter, what else can it be
Than that which occupies their masters' minds?

Tehura

Ye cockerels! What matter is it; then?

Huemac

The approaching feast, the yearly sacrifice.

Tehura

Crow on, and louder! Nay hush: the Holy One.

[*Through the middle door* Prospero *and* Oro *come on to the terrace.* Prospero *is beardless with white locks, and of reverend appearance;* Oro *is an Indian, dark-bearded, a good ten years younger than* Prospero.

Prospero

Nay, let all things remain as heretofore.
Leave me to pass my days in solitude:
Removed from life, I am to life the nearer.
I tarry here among you as a stranger,
A guest! I am no more, no more,
Here, or in any other land on earth.
True, I was once a ruler; and my sceptre
Stood then for joy of life and love of men.
I lightly bore the burden of my crown
Since wanton youth had twined it with fresh garlands
Of fleeting roses. Only the flowers of Hope
Wilted together with the flowers of Faith.
The power of righteousness upon the earth
Was rather powerlessness: of this was I
Upon my throne a terrible example.
Was it predestined in the eternal wisdom
That I should yet become a source of goodness,
Though tardily—Thou dost affirm it, Oro!
So is the beggar mightier than the ruler.
Then let the beggar stay a beggar, better
Ye cannot do.

Oro

Sublime and mighty one,
God's Son and Prophet, all this that thou sayest

Touching thyself can not obscure the halo
That sheds its radiant light upon thy countenance.
We know it well, I and my people, what
To be a man involves for thee. The power
Of Godhead cramps itself in human fetters,
Yea, feigns humility and beggary.
Great love has ever taken this strait path,
The only one which leads from God to man.

Prospero

If thou believest, I will not deprive thee,
Oro, of this thy faith. Kindred traditions—
Or rather the selfsame tradition—once
I heard of in another world than this.
Among this remnant of thy ancient people
Who, when the ocean cast me with my daughter
Shipwrecked upon the shore, naked and poor,
Welcomed us kindly, there still survives the saga
Of the White Saviour. They are waiting for him,
The only begotten of the Heavenly Father,
Who is to come and lead his chosen people
Back once again to their ancestral kingdom.
Nay, I am not the Saviour whom ye look for.
But if thou thinkest it is in my power
A little to repay the help ye gave me,
Continue thou to be my mediator.

Oro

My lord, my office as thy mediator
I must lay down. The great part of the people
Demand with almost frenzied violence
Thy front to shine upon them, and thy mouth
To teach them wisdom, and thy hand to rule.

Thy counsel, which was law to me, has severed
them
From many a custom sanctified by age.
But they are not yet weaned from the old customs.
And bigotry, that now is dispossessed,
Goes scattering terror round the huts, and
whispers
Of punishment for sin and rites unpaid.
And, of a truth, the awful evil spirit
Of the nether world is knocking underfoot
As if he wished to warn us or to threaten.
But thunder rolls within the holy mountain,
And clouds of anger are shot hissing out.

PROSPERO

And yet, in spite of all, I will not, Oro!
When once the mountain and the deeps are quiet
So will the frightened folk be quiet too.

ORO

Thy "no," my lord, must once again be spoken,
When I am moved, yea, or compelled to come
Before thee with the elders of our people
To offer thee the crown in terms precise.
And weigh this also ere thou givest answer:
It is not only trembling lambs that cry
For help and guidance to a mighty shepherd:
The herd is thick with wolves, that prowl around
Spying and working mischief on thy servant,
And even, O illustrious one, on thee.

[ORO *bends a knee with reverence, and goes away, followed respectfully by* MATZATZIN.

PROSPERO

Thou'lt do me a last service out of love,
Tehura.

TEHURA

O my lord, I am thy servant,
To listen and obey.

PROSPERO

The priestess fillet
Bind thou upon thy brow, covering thine eyes,
And so, a Seer, guided in thy wandering,
Find out for me my last predestined place.

TEHURA

What dost thou mean?

PROSPERO

I know the place is near,
Although myself I wist not how to find it.
No higher boon I crave in all the heavens
Than to behold my last goal on this earth,
For me appointed when I first drew breath,
Disclosed by thee.

TEHURA

O reverend lord, the earth
Can set no goal for those who are like thee.

PROSPERO

O yea! And how I yearn for it! 'Tis death!
Behold me: I am weary, weary, weary.
[HUEMAC *disappears into the palace.*

TEHURA

Thou art not weary, master. Tonatiu
Is never weary. For his weariness
Is like that of the sacred bird, the phœnix,
When his great god-like wings twitch of themselves
And he is driven by a mighty impulse
To urge himself aloft through all the heavens
To recreate himself in the sun's fires.

PROSPERO

Thou parriest, Tehura; the loving service
I have required of thee thou wilt not grant.
Thou who believest in my deeds and power
Behold my sorrow also, and my weakness.

TEHURA

Even as the eyes of this small sacred rabbit
Are windows glowing red from the soul's flames,
So art thou full of waking fire. And fire
Is ever drawn to fire. Thy living vessel
Will to the kiln to melt and be destroyed,
Then, spun on the sun-potter's glowing wheel,
Will issue in a still more precious shape.

PROSPERO

First phœnix, then a vessel full of fire!
No, thou art wrong, Tehura. If thou sayest
A jar of ashes, that I am and shall be.
I have lived here peacefully among you
Hidden, nigh solitary, and well-nigh happy.
In these great ruins I went to and fro
A spirit. From the sculptures on these stones
And others never touched by human hand

I loosed the meaning. Often in the night
There echoed through these ruined palace halls
Frolic of ball play and the mirth of dancing,
Stringed music and the maddening noise of song.
Magic became my life: I a magician.
I had the power to call up shapes, to treat them
In friendly wise as guests, or with a gesture
To ban them back again to nothingness.
And nearly all of them were thus obedient.
But there was one who still unbidden came,
And only gave ground when it suited him,
Passing through every ban and magic circle.
Him I will name to thee alone at parting
In the appointed place thou findest for me.

TEHURA

It cannot be that thou wilt go from us
When dark and ominous signs are gathering.

PROSPERO

Yea, there it is; the signs are meant for me.
Thou hast perceived thyself that it is so.
The ocean drove its surging tide on high,
Bore houses off, broke thousand-year-old trunks,
And the very realms of earth began to heave.
Water and steam poured out of the ploughed fields.
The holy mountain seethes: its snowy summit
Sprouts in the night a tree of glowing fire,
Whose spreading top streams out in sullen flame
So that our nights are lit by hellish flares.

TEHURA

And all these signs thou wilt not exorcise?

PROSPERO

The storm will pass, and leave you as it found
you:
But me it will not leave. Forebodings move me,
Not outer signs, like those that crowd around,
Nay, it is from within my soul is troubled.
Long-buried things are stirring, and will out,
And hands I feel of nights, that seek to grasp me.
It is not death I fear, but a new life:
Show me the spot on which I may evade it.

TEHURA

I will be strong, my lord. Thou wilt not let
The glory blind my eyes when I go with thee
On thy last journey to the fiery mountain.
I know, thou didst once tell me, thither must
thou
Over its never-trodden eternal snows
To speak upon its top with the dread mothers
Before thy passing, when thou goest home.

PROSPERO

Too late! A new voice rises in me. Silence!
And more than silence. My slate tablets here,
Covered with multitudinous curling symbols,
Unriddle the new world to the fit seeker,
If the word's inner meaning be for me.

[PYRRHA, PROSPERO's *daughter, called* YAKKA *by the Indians, enters. An Indian attendant,* COYA, *follows her. Both are dressed as huntresses.* PYRRHA's *skirts are kilted, and she carries a spear. Her red hair is closely bound round her head,*

and is like a heavy golden burden. The fourteen-year old girl is tall, and of an austere beauty and grace. She carries a quiver with arrows on her shoulder. Coya *is laden with the booty, a condor, and carries also a bow and arrows. She has besides* Pyrrha's *bow, and some spare hunting spears.*

Pyrrha

O father, what a journey lies behind me!
Tehura, give me water, I must drink.

Prospero

Thou hast been long away; I was nigh troubled.
Where wert thou, Pyrrha?

Pyrrha

Yea, how can I tell?

Prospero

What hast thou there?

Pyrrha

Show it my father, Coya.

Prospero

[*Before whose feet* Coya *has thrown the eagle.*
So at long last thou hast brought down the robber
From heaven's gate, bold huntress?

PYRRHA

Yea, my father.
[*She drinks the pitcher empty that* TEHURA *has given her.*
O comfort, comfort!

PROSPERO

How came this success?

PYRRHA

Not easily. Tell thou my father, Coya.

COYA

'Twas in the rocky hills, on a small track
Near the great central mountain ridge that cuts
The island at its foot into two halves . . .

PROSPERO

What is it that has happened to thee, daughter?

PYRRHA

Happened? We were out hunting, that is all.
But, father, why dost ask?

PROSPERO

O, let it be.

PYRRHA

Not so, for I would fain discover, father,
What is it that lies hidden in thy question.

PROSPERO

And what is it lies hidden in thy answer?

PYRRHA

What is there I could hide?

PROSPERO

Listen, my child,
We have been wandering in diverse regions.
Mine, where Tehura went with me, lies far
From yonder rocky hunting-ground of thine.
We have wrought diversely with hand and spirit,
Let us wait patiently on understanding.
What lies behind my question is but this:
Thou bringest the condor, bringest the lamb-devourer,
The royal enemy and lord of the air,
Whom seldom only the boldest hunter's arrow
Can find. It was thy dream from childhood onwards.
Was it thy arrow that pierced through his heart,
Or is the honour due unto another?

PYRRHA

Ask Coya, father, whose the arrow was.

COYA

'Twas Yakka's arrow, noble lord; she only
Merits the glory of that master shot.

PROSPERO

And that was why I questioned thee, dear daughter.

For one who loves the hunt so much and meets
Such wondrous luck, thou art exceeding silent,
And Coya must be mouthpiece, where of old
Of deeds less glorious thou alone wert herald.
Did Amaru accompany thee?

Pyrrha

No.

Prospero

And yet I bade him to go with thee, since
He knows so well the paths and fords and passes.

Pyrrha

Forgive me, father, if I seek my chamber.
I have a need of sleep upon me.

Prospero

Go.

[Pyrrha *goes.*
She is untamed: she is untameable.

Tehura

Her inner stream of feeling she held back
Because she found me with thee, noble father.

Prospero

Knows she not how completely I do trust thee?

Tehura

She knows it well, but disapproves thereof.

PROSPERO

Magic became my life, I a magician.
I had the power to call up shapes, to treat them
In friendly wise as guests, or with a gesture
To ban them back again to nothingness.
Except that one I told thee of, Tehura,
Which comes and goes as often as it will:
And that one was a moment since beside me.

TEHURA

Pyrrha? But Pyrrha is of flesh and blood.
How shall I understand thee, reverend lord?

PROSPERO

Not Pyrrha! But the shadow comes with her.
A shadow is it, although hued like life,
Only less real than living flesh and blood.
The shadow comes with her, yea, Pyrrha throws it.
There! There he stands! Look yonder, and thou
seest him.

TEHURA

I guess at whom thou meanest. 'Tis thy son.

PROSPERO

I told thee I am a magician, knowing
Nothing of sons or daughters, only shadows!—
But no: I live on two planes of existence.
On one I see real men and women wander,
Relish the simple fruits and grains of the earth,
See thee, the apple of my aged eye,
Another Eve, but innocent of sin,
See my proud daughter Pyrrha, and am proud

Of her wild freedom. But the other plane
Has come to mean much more to me than this.
—Show me the mighty eagle nearer, Coya.
[*To* Tehura.
This bird was too a phœnix! now a corpse.
And wherefore else should we have seen, Tehura,
The golden man sit weeping in the sun?
[*To* Coya.
How comes it that thy mistress droops in spirit
Coya, in spite of such a royal booty?

Coya

She has confided in me. May I tell it?

Prospero

That is for thee to say. Thou must decide.

Coya

In the very moment when the mighty bird
Was struck and weltered on the stones, appeared,
Said Yakka, over her upon the cliff
A figure, her own image, that affrighted her.
And truly she fell down and lay unconscious.

Prospero

Her image?

Coya

Later she described it to me,
And whether what she saw was but the ghost
Of her own soul, or something real and living,
She did not know.

Prospero

She saw . . . what did she see?
Was it another Dian like herself
With bow upon her back and spears for throwing?

Coya

That also became more and more uncertain
The further we were distant from the spot
Where the strange wonder thrust itself upon her.
"It could as well have been," she said, "a youth,
Although as like me as my very double."

Prospero

What is it, and what does it mean, Tehura?
[*Rises, obviously moved.*
[Pyrrha's *voice from within the ruins.*
Coya!

Prospero

Go, for thy mistress calls thee.

Coya

Yea.
[Coya *goes quickly into the inner ruins.*

Prospero

Again I ask myself, what does it mean?
Of all the omens in these hours of waiting
'Tis the most threatening. And the magic art
Of the magician, which it oversteps,
Avails not to unriddle it. What means it?
The shadow that from Pyrrha's being rises

It is her brother's shadow. Thou alone
So long as I have been upon the island
Hast heard me speak of him, her brother, and
My own degenerate and buried son.
And now, the evil shadow, taking shape,
Appears to her who all unknowing throws it,
Shows itself bodily to my daughter Pyrrha?
Who never heard that she had any brother?

[Amaru, *swinging a club, appears at a discreet distance. He is a handsome Indian youth.*

Prospero

He signals. What's his will?

Amaru

Knows Tonatiu
That in the gulf, beyond the fiery mountain,
Strange children of the sun urge a canoe?

Prospero

Thou sawest the boat that here and there shot through
The wildest, most tormenting of my dreams.
And if my dreams grow pregnant, and give birth
To solid apparitions like this boat,
Club-swinger Amaru, then thou and I
Together must take measures to destroy it.

Amaru

May Amaru approach thy holiness,
O Tonatiu?

Prospero

Thou mayest, but forget
The vain illusions of thine eyes, which carry
No meaning for my last hours and for me
Whatever may have called them into being.

Amaru

[*Bending a knee.*
Thy nod is Amaru's command. May now
The keeper of thy household, Amaru,
The guardian of thy meadows, Amaru,
The leader of thy warriors, Amaru,
From thy nobility a boon obtain
That shall requite my true and faithful service?

Prospero

How strange: I have lived ever modestly,
Before my door the sacred beggar's bowl,
Wherein all turns to poison save the gifts
Of kindly, free and charitable hearts:
The bowl it was that with its alms sustained me.
But now there throngs from every side a horde
Of creditors upon me in my cell,
As if I were a bankrupt merchant who
Had only borrowed, paying nothing back,
And, to crown all, were cheat and liar too.
Am I all that? No, no, and no again!
When I go from you, I shall go from you
Laden indeed with debts of gratitude,
But with no others: poor, as once I came.

Amaru

What then are we, O lord, if thou art poor?

The magic from thy lips makes deserts bloom
And learn to bring forth fruit: and in thy hand
Swings the divining rod, and turns with power
To point out hidden treasures such as gold
Water and salt and coal within the earth.
From thy mouth issue words to loose or bind.
And, if thou wouldst, thou couldst bind Amaru,
And loose him. Speak the word, and Amaru
Is changed into a tiger, or again
Thou makest him God's equal with a breath.

Prospero

Speak then, and thou wilt find out, Amaru,
How little I can do of all these things.

Amaru

Give me Tehura, Holy One, for my wigwam.
—Thou sayest nought? Why is the Master silent?
Well must he know how mighty is his word,
And therefore keeps it locked behind closed lips.

Prospero

Leave me first to a deeper dumbness, O
Thou ardent stripling. Cool thy fevered blood
Until another silence falls upon me
That shakes her like ripe fruit into thy bosom.

Amaru

Such answers Tonatiu has given me often.

Prospero

If my words please thee not, the way is free,
Thou mayest speak freely, and there stands
Tehura.

TEHURA

[*Drawing herself up proudly.*

O holy father, thy words fell on me
Like bitter scourges leaving dusky weals
When thou didst liken me to a dead fruit
That a foul spirit shakes down from its tree.
But if thou chidest—for 'tis not causeless chiding—
Help me to understand the fault thou chidest.
But thou, hast thou forgotten, Amaru,
The sacred lineage from which I spring?
Despisest thou the holy oaths which bind
The dedicated temple-bride? Dost dare
To sully me with common earthly passion?

AMARU

Dost not believe in the might of Tonatiu?
Can he not bind and loose whate'er he will?

TEHURA

Wise messenger of God, thou dost uplift
And purify all lowly things, but yet
'Tis far from thee to quench that which aspires
And tramp it meanly smoking underfoot.

PROSPERO

Lay by your quarrel; I hear cymbals beating—
What wonder is this? It must be weighty matters
That bring thy father Oro at the head
Of all the folk, with chiefs and headmen, hither.

[*With the monotonous noise of Indian drums a throng of natives approaches. In front is a group of priests led by*

ORO; *behind them chieftains, in gorgeous feather dresses. Within measured distance the drumming stops at a sign from* ORO. *After a solemn silence and solemn greeting* PROSPERO *draws himself up and begins.*

Comest thou back so quickly, and so furnished,
Oro, my mediator?

ORO

Mighty wanderer,
For the last time thou seest thy mediator;
Furnished I am indeed, and with the will
Of my whole folk unanimous: wouldst thou hear
What that will is, ask, and I shall be brief.

PROSPERO

Comest thou to make demands, think, I am poor.
Bringest thou burdens, know that I am weak.
Bringest thou gifts, let them be only such
As can be laid within a beggar's bowl.

THE INDIAN CROWD

[*In an excited uproar.*

Be thou our king! O master, be our king!

ORO

O saviour from the sun, now hast thou heard
The thousand-throated summons. Like a storm
My people's soul has taken to its wings
And rushing to the sky made known its will.
Thou seest, it sweeps the dam away, and needs
No more a mediator as before.

Prospero

Ye dusky dwellers on this sacred island,
What foolishness is this? See my white hair,
Think of the burden of my many years.

The Indian Crowd

Be king, be king! O master, be our king!

[Pyrrha *comes out of the house, proud, cool, aloof.*

Pyrrha

What means this noise? What is it that has happened?

The Indian Crowd

The golden daughter of the sun, behold her!
Yakka, the Lady of Heaven, the golden goddess!

Prospero

Pyrrha, they want to force me to be king!

Pyrrha

Thou tremblest, shaken. Dost thou weep, my father?

Prospero

O, didst thou know with what a bloody scorn
Destiny tears my old-scarred wounds asunder,
What it has taken from me, and now offers.
Wounded by heavy loss, and healed by wisdom,
The hand of destiny seizes me again
And will compel me to accept a gift
That brings me down to be a mock for children.

And yet: and yet . . . how many stir in me
Of the loved vanities, the long-dead forces.
The nerve of lordship stings in me like fire,
And while contempt sits gnashing in my jaws
And raging shame nigh chokes my breath away,
A glowing triumph battles in my eyelids
And causes both my eyes to overflow.

The Indian Crowd

He weeps, as weeps the God within the sun!

Oro

[*Aside to* Prospero.
Answer, my lord, the folk are shy and startled;
Their common will breaks up with fickle ease.

Prospero

O, thou hast led me to a precipice,
Where I can choose but one of two things, either
A plunge into destruction or a crown.
What says Tehura?

[Tehura *takes a fillet from* Oro's *hand, and binds it round* Prospero's *head.*

The Indian Crowd

See, the temple maiden
Has bound the sacred fillet round his head.
Hail to our priest and king! Hail to our king!

Oro

O king, as High Priest 'tis my fitting duty
To greet thee first of all by thy new title.
And grant me now this favour, as a pledge

Of my eternal fealty, to give up
To thee that chosen vessel who was first
To consecrate thy temples. Take the best
I have to offer, take it to thyself,
The queen! descended from the sacred blood
Even as thou, Tehura, my own daughter.

PYRRHA

Has madness seized this ancient savage, father?

PROSPERO

What says Tehura?

TEHURA

Only one thing: take me.

[PROSPERO *takes* TEHURA'S *outstretched hand.* AMARU *springs forward and heaves up his club to strike down* PROSPERO; *but he lets it sink again.*

AMARU

Upon the Gods' blasphemer war, war, war!
[*He springs away.*

PROSPERO

Who was that?

ORO

The sly rebel, Amaru,
Who has for long been slinking through the people
Sowing disharmony. May he be accursed!
And now, speak to the folk thyself of sacrifice.

Say what they want to hear, and afterwards
Do what thy better vision judges worthy.
Say, in accordance with the sacred usage
The mighty sacrifice of the atonement
Will shortly be performed. Tell them thou wilt not
Deny the Gods their due of holy blood.
Speak to them in this wise, and they will kiss
Thy garment's hem, and deem themselves in heaven
Blissful, if thou but lookest on them once.

Prospero

Think of the great sacrifice! Prepare yourselves!

[*Joyous shouting of the people.*

SECOND ACT

The inside of a rocky cave. ASTORRE *and* LAPO, *both seriously ill, lie on beds of leaves heaped between wooden boards. The garments they have on are wretched: their coverlets are tattered rags.* ASTORRE *is a young man of noble features,* LAPO *black-haired and black-bearded.* DELLO *is a squat fellow, with a stupid cunning face. He is in the forties:* ASTORRE *about twenty-five years old,* LAPO *in the late thirties. The cave is furnished with the barest necessities of life: a small fire burns somewhere, and not far from it stands an earthen water-jug. A crossbow, a blunderbuss, and several hatchets hang on the wall. The exit, a hole man-high, is closed by a rude door. There is a table, which has been just as rudely knocked together: several blocks of wood serve as seats.* DELLO *is splitting wood.*

LAPO

[*In fever.*

Gold! Wash it out! Grains of it, ingots, bars!
A sieve! Take sieves, and wade into the stream.
Catch it! The gold sand's coming down in clouds!
O God, my crucible, my crucible!

You scoundrels, you have robbed me of my
crucible!
What? Am I drowning? Help me, help me, O!

DELLO

The greedy guttler! In the throes of death,
And yet he fills his gob as full as ever.

ASTORRE

Water!

DELLO

O, everything has run to water.
Well said: my capital has run to water.
A laden cargo, water: fabulous treasures,
Plans, projects, profits, all have turned to water!

ASTORRE

Give me some water, Dello! Do you hear?

DELLO

What else? A jar of Lacrimæ Christi? Coming!
And if perchance you're hungry, Prince Astorre,
Say "dish" and lo, the sausage will appear.

ASTORRE

I understand no word, friend, of this prating.

DELLO

And I can get no water for you, sir!
The jug is drained, and the day is hot as hell.

Lapo

Ah, ha, ha, ha, she strikes! We are stuck fast.
The sharp rock runs us through amidships like
A buffalo-horn stuck in a horse's belly.
Damn you, a rope! A boat! Now you can pump.

Dello

Hell burn thee up, thou evil ruffian!
So hast thou a fair wage for thy black arts
That led us to destruction on this voyage.

Lapo

[*Raving with fever, flings himself on* Dello.
My crucible! Wretch, thou hast my crucible!
In the wet hut I cannot melt the gold.

Dello

[*Pushes him back on the bed.*
Miserable bag of bones! Wilt never die?
He was the man that stabbed the sailor Pierre,
And then he ate his victim's flesh, the monster.

Astorre

As you do love my life, speak not of that.

Dello

I love mine better, Prince, I say it frankly.
And if the pestilent spectre springs on me
Again, I'll slit his windpipe with this knife.
[Astorre *sighs deeply and faints.*

Dello

[*Goes to his bed.*
What? Has the horror killed him? Is he dead?
Well, the provisions will hold out the longer.
Eh, let me see: what's underneath thy pillow?
[*He hunts through the leaf-bed for valuables.*

Astorre

[*Coming to himself.*
God be merciful to us, we are cannibals.

Dello

What do you say? Your eyes were so asquint
I nearly thought that all was over with you.

Astorre

Thou seekest to kill me and to rob me, Dello.
Thou savage beast, thou'lt handle me like Pierre.

Dello

And if I wanted to, could you prevent me?
But what advantage could I reap from it?
For the sum of twenty thousand golden ducats
You have betrayed me, gentlemen that you are.
Could I extract the thousandth part of that
From your corrupted sores, or from your carcass
Bloated and swelled up with the pestilence?

Astorre

Inhuman fiend!

Dello

Inhuman! What's inhuman?

If God and the devil have made me inhuman
What's that to me? Where could the clay find strength
To stand against two potters such as these?

Astorre

The Prince will come back and will punish thee.

Dello

Yea, as a ghost, a spirit, not otherwise.
If I had lost a musk-pig to a tiger
And got it not again, I'd feel the loss
More bitterly than that of such a monkey.

Astorre

O, I am feeble.

Dello

Yea, by God, you are.

Astorre

I would not else allow thy words to pass.
But Ormann comes, and he will punish thee.

Dello

I put it to you, what is that to me?
To punish me more than I am punished now,
Yea, than we all are, is beyond an Ormann.
A desolate shore, cast off into the ocean,
Vermin, mosquitoes, vipers. And to fan
The miserable spark of life, we risk
Our necks to bring a bird's egg from the cliffs.
San Borondon! You say: a Prince! I say,

A skunk, a skunk! that murders first his father,
Subverts his father's throne, and then misrules
The country till himself is driven out.
Then gets himself invested by the king
Of Portugal with San Borondon, an island
Existing at the most within the brain
Of that pock-pitted vagabond, Lapo.
And we, with seven keels and five hundred men,
Have no more pressing business than with him
And all that we possess to founder here.
Cinnamon, spice, cloves, onyx, chalcedony,
Gold, pepper, to be sure, I wallow in them.
I roll in pearls, in ducats! like a nabob!
We'll stick him in birds' droppings. He can lie
To the honour of Portugal three thousand years
In peace and comfortable filth before
A single man sets foot upon this island.

[Ormann *comes. He is an uncommonly beautiful and sinewy man of not yet thirty. His movements show strength, and a bold and free demeanour. Golden red hair falls to his broad shoulders; a golden down covers his upper lip, and a well-cared for pointed beard his chin. Like* Pyrrha, *whom he resembles in complexion, figure, features and movement, he carries a crossbow, a hunting spear, and hunting knife. The bloody skin of a newly killed tiger hangs on his shoulder.*

Dello

It's you!

ORMANN

Yea, as thou seest, and still living.
How goes it with you, comrades?

DELLO

O, so-so,
La-la!

ORMANN

Have you attended to the sick,
Captain?

DELLO

A little, as my knowledge served.

ORMANN

I have been three days gone. I have seen much
And much endured in these three days. I tell thee
It is an island rich with many wonders.

DELLO

Mosquitoes, ay, and vermin six ells long.
Emmets that are as big as mice, and mice
As big as rats, and rats as big as rabbits!

ORMANN

That may well be: but did ye hear, as I did,
The rumbling thunder quaking in the earth?
Near to the mountain's foot came blow on blow,
And stones were shot ell-high into the air.

DELLO

Here clattered axe and crossbow from the wall.

ORMANN

I have been climbing high among the mountains.

DELLO

Your Highness has been ever too foolhardy.

ORMANN

Pooh, did you think that I would ne'er come back?
Ill weeds die not so easily: mark you that.
I have the knack of knowing what the hour
Has struck, and turning back at the right moment.

DELLO

Your Highness! What could strike the hour up yonder?

ORMANN

My heart within, my pulses, and with hammers!
They struck so loudly that I was in pain,
And both my temples boomed and throbbed like bells.
And you shall hear the hour strike also, Dello,
The next time when you clamber up with me
To yonder region where my courage failed.

DELLO

My courage has begun to ebb, my lord,
Nay, more, has vanished, as if blown away:
If I have need of more, I must go borrow it.

ORMANN

That's the true Dello speaking! A true answer,
Worthy of Dello, captain of our ship.

Well, to be brief, blood gushed from both my lips,
Giddiness seized me, stunned and drove me back,
And to my sorrow forced me to desist
Before I reached my goal, the mountain summit.

Dello

What summit do you mean?

Ormann

Why, yonder peak
That towers above all others, the snow mountain.

Dello

The mountain-hell, the vomiting volcano,
That lights the country up at night with fire?
What could a man like you catch fishing there?

Ormann

More of that later: there is much to tell.

Dello

You shower blood.

Ormann

Yea, and the savage beast
Hindered me sore when I was near the camp.

Dello

A tiger!

Ormann

Yea, I shot the pheasant first.
Where pheasants are the tiger's not far off.

I knew that. So it proved. What could I do
But tickle him a little with my spear.
And I thought too, the skin is for Astorre,
Who after all can make good use of it.
How is it with him?

Dello

By Saint Damian,
Out of one fainting fit into the other.

Ormann

Look to him, for the prince will soon recover.
How goes it with Lapo?

Dello

But look at him,
He's on the point of telling you himself.

Lapo

[*Propped on the edge of his bed has stared fixedly at* Ormann *since his entrance. Now he begins in delirium.*
Prince Ormann, robbers; thieves! My crucible!
Help me to look for it. Thou hast found it, rascal.
And there rise clouds of dust: gold! All is gold!
Gold to the sky! Enormous lumps of gold!
Give me the crucible. O, abject villain,
Where is it? You are hiding it! I had
My hand on it but now and it is gone.
I run, I look for it; you greedy dogs,
You want to hinder me . . . run . . . look . . . get out!

You eat my gold up! Ho, 'tis raining gold!
The streams are streaming gold, and in the earth
It rolls . . . it thunders gold! Your Highness,
help,
Help me to find my crucible. I am lost,
A poor lost devil, if . . . my crucible! O!

ORMANN

Give him some saucepan or the other, Dello—
Well-nigh thou makest my flesh creep, Lapo,
But none the less thou art a kindly fellow;
To-morrow thou wilt find thy wits again.

DELLO

Then were it worse for him than now, me seems.
For what a desperate case is ours, your Highness,
And what fate can we look for but to die
A lingering death here far from other men.

ORMANN

Thinkest thou so? Mayhap; but who can tell?
Astorre, comrade of my heart, how art thou?

ASTORRE

O my beloved prince, now all is well.
I suffered agonies with thee away.

DELLO

The fever has murderously shaken him.
He knows not where he is: and what he sees
Are wild delusions, delirious phantasies.

ASTORRE

Kill me before thou goest away again,
Else am I at the mercy of this butcher
Whose knife I narrowly escaped but now.

ORMANN

What's this?

DELLO

A thousand knives, my lord, believe him!

ASTORRE

I did not speak of you! Come nearer! So.

DELLO

He'll whisper garbled rubbish in your ears
So that your Highness will no more give credence
To what you see and hear, I'll wager on it.

ASTORRE

O, scoundrel!—He is right, I am in fever,
I speak at random. But a hell is raging
Within my veins. I am consumed in flames.
Water, water! Give me a drink of water!

DELLO

The jug is empty.

ORMANN

Go and get more, then, Dello.

Dello

You think so?

Ormann

Thou think'st otherwise? Go quickly.
[Dello, *although sulky and reluctant, obeys. He takes the jug and goes.*

Astorre

Ormann, he wanted me to die of thirst.
And in yon corner he compounded poison
Out of a yellow stone to poison me.

Ormann

Now I am with thee, set thy mind at ease.

Astorre

Dost not believe me?

Ormann

In a manner, yea.
Only, I know our gallant captain as
An honest man till now, and a brave mariner.

Astorre

He hates us, Ormann, broods upon revenge,
Swears that we have defrauded him of life,
And when he thinks the moment favourable
He'll do away with us behind our backs.

Ormann

[*Laughing.*
Before that I will tie him to a tree,

And there he can be friendly with the vultures.—
But God forbid it. The poor brave old man,
He has no inkling of our accusations.
He comes now with the water. Drink, and hearken.

[Dello *comes in with the waterjug.*

Dello

I am a sponge squeezed dry; for all the sweat
Out of my body's run into my clothes.
Ay, Dello! Dello here, and Dello there!
What would become of you were I not here?

Lapo

[*Shrieks.*

Eleven thousand ducats of full weight,
And nine reals, and thirty maravedis,
Come to my share, thou dog of a ship's captain.
Out with them, or I make a dead man of thee.

Dello

Silence, thou project-maker, swindler, rogue!

[*To* Ormann.

You see, I was not idle in your absence.
If only half the reputation's true
That has been saddled on me in this cave
I am no longer a poor castaway
But a sly merchant, sitting warm on ducats,
Hoarding ships' freights, hogsheads of wine, and casks
Of pickled pork and finest mortadella.

[Ormann *laughs heartily while* Astorre *drinks.*

ASTORRE

[*After he has drunk.*

That comforts me!

ORMANN

Since thou art comforted,
Let me recount to thee still more of comfort:
For verily I bring thee much of it,
Gleaned on my wanderings, if I mistake not.

ASTORRE

[*Secretly and imploringly takes* ORMANN'S *hand.*

Ormann, my time has come. I die.

ORMANN

Nay, nay!
Thou'lt live to share with me full many a brush
And many a merry venture. On the morrow
Thou'lt be afoot, my friend, and of good cheer.

ASTORRE

Where wert thou?

ORMANN

Up among the eternal snows.

ASTORRE

Happiest of men! Didst plunge in snow, and roll it
And take it in thy mouth?

ORMANN

All that I did.
'Twas like the slopes of Monte Generoso,
Or elsewhere in the wall of Alps at home.
But how one's breast expands upon the heights!
I feel it still, even in your sweltering heat.

ASTORRE

Could I but once more climb the heights with thee
Before I sink in darkness, Ormann.

ORMANN

Tomorrow
I'll take thee huckaback with me, my friend.
There stands the fir-tree of our Apennines.
Thou canst break branches of that Lombard birch
And gather flowers like this that I have here.

ASTORRE

By the heaven's blue, 'tis gentian!

ORMANN

Soft; but listen.
'Tis not the only wonder I have found.
And thou wilt find thy nine days' wonder yet:
For from up yonder thou beholdest Canaan,
Seest the Promised Land lie at thy feet.

DELLO

Mirage.

ORMANN

[*Laughing.*

There Dello speaks! What e'er it be,
So barren as this side the mountain is
So wantonly luxuriates the other—
Across the range that grudges us one rill
Of water, and sheds torrents roaring yonder
Broadening out to rivers in the valleys—
I counted four of them, and in my thought
I named them: Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel
And Frat, the rivers of the Garden of Eden.

DELLO

San Borondon.

ORMANN

And how San Borondon?

DELLO

Your Highness often has described it to me,
The wonder island, on the admiral's ship.
It ever swam in the blue air before us,
Slipping beyond our grasp. How many times
Have we gone sailing into golden bights
With wood-crowned hills and with luxuriant pastures,
Alas, alas! but never an anchorage.

ORMANN

Consistent Dello. He will not believe it
Even if I give him milk and honey to drink.

Dello

It was sea-water that we swallowed last.
Of milk and honey I have no remembrance.

Ormann

And wherefore then remember? Look ahead!

Dello

But all my wealth and money lie behind me,
Spoil for the fish at the bottom of the sea.
And that because I looked ahead with you,
And drove the convoy, since you willed it so,
Upon these cliffs, where it was dashed to pieces.

Ormann

Well, thou droll huckster, we are none the worse.
But tell me, didst not follow thy nose too
When clouds of fragrance out on the high seas
Wafted us air from some near Paradise
With snatches of sweet music on its wings?
Hast thou not, leaning eager from the ship,
Fished golden apples of the Hesperides
Out of the water, swarming round the bow?
And many a rare sweet alien fruit, whose like
Never before had ravished eye and palate?

Dello

Satan himself it was that paved the way
Seductively towards this devil's island.
First we had bread, fruit, music, and abundance,
Then hunger, need, and human flesh for food.

ORMANN

Silence! I can forbear no longer, Dello.
Thou knowest me. But one uncalled-for word, . . .
Thou liest gagged and panting on the ground.
[DELLO *slinks snarling into the background.*
Incredulous fool! He rests not till one's maddened.
He has faith only in a purse that's larded,
But I trust single-hearted in my star!—
Do thou have faith in me, and what I tell thee.

ASTORRE

Speak, Ormann, speak: whom should I trust but thee?

ORMANN

Then learn, the island is inhabited:
Not empty of men, as we have thought till now.
Beyond the mountain there must live a people
That knows the use of compass and of plummet.

DELLO

Heaven grant you may be wrong in this: if not
The people yonder must be cannibals,
And we'll find certain burial in their bellies.
Only, an ancient salt like me knows better.
At most the devil Setebos lives here,
And breeds moon-calves and such accursed beasts.

ASTORRE

Answer him not, speak further, Ormann.

ORMANN

Good;
I found an upper valley, full of stones,
Cradle of glacier waters. Among blocks
Of lichen, green as ancient ore, there lies,
Still as it had been moveless for eternities,
A lake, so dead as were its waters those
That only the sacred ferryman of dead souls
Cuts with his keel or ruffles with his oar.
When I resolved to climb down from the ridge
On which I stood into that yawning chasm,
That valley of hell, I followed not the wooing
Of any wind. No breath of air was stirring,
No song of birds was heard, the very flight
Of butterflies or moths had echoed there.
When I stood down below and looked up sheer
Between the Cyclop-walls, I saw the sky,
The glowing sky of day, as black as night
And full of stars. The lake reflected stars
As I stood on the shore. And if I think
On that dark double abyss that opened out
Before me so . . . But what are words? The eye
Alone can comprehend the eye. Alone
Infinite vision can conceive the world
Of infinite vision: alone eternal silence
Can grasp the terrible majesty of silence.
What I knew yonder, what I saw and felt
Tells me with awful clearness I am dumb.

ASTORRE

Wilt spurn me if I tell thee that thy sayings,
Deep as they are, call someone to my mind?

ORMANN

Spurned I thee yet? I know, too, whom thou meanest.

ASTORRE

Who but thy father speaks so like thyself?

ORMANN

Well, to be brief: this cauldron of a valley
Seemed to me intimate and strange, the threshold
Of a strange house which I had crossed before
Many a time, in dreaming and in waking.
The black water was like a sheet of steel
That closes in abysmal mysteries,
Letting dark hints escape its menacing cover.
O, what a terrible Presence gripped my heart
With icy fingers! And in the wide space
Of the blank universe, how lost to hope
I stood there: never was I so forlorn.
And yet I never felt so closely thrust
With every heartbeat into the monstrous destiny
Of man and the world. Was it some angry God
That, cursing, tore us out of chaos, hurled us
With roars of thunderous rage upon our course?
Whom did he hate? us men? What then are we,
And whence derived, to draw his wrath upon us?
Who is our own king, our own Lord and God?
Where are the brothers and sisters of our blood?
Is the God's wrath for ever unappeased,
Or is he haply now at last appeased
And has forgotten his anger and his deed,
And this his world, made by his hand, and slung
Out of his sight for ever into space?

But who will then redeem us, if we are
So isolated, so forgotten here
Among our rigid and forgotten wreckage?
Of what avail to pray unto our father
If he could not prevent an enemy
From wreaking such a deed upon his children?
When will the good, the mighty shepherd come,
His bosom filled with love omnipotent,
With love that is all-knowing and can find
His straying sheep? He who finds all lost things,
Who reconciles all things and makes them one,
Who makes all happy, and who pities all,
Who first of all must be a conqueror?

Dello

O God, you make me melancholy, Prince;
You have a melancholy cast of mind.
Let's pluck the birds for cooking; and today
If our great cask of rum lightens itself
By a full quart, the fault is yours, not mine.
My head is spinning: what a midges' dance
Of questions. If I heard you rightly, Prince,
You have a dozen times committed blasphemy.
And were you not so far from retribution
You would assuredly burn at the stake.
Well, therein too you are your father's son.

Ormann

Say not a word about my father, Dello.

Astorre

O Ormann, throw the vile beast out of doors.

Ormann

Well, in this place of ghosts, full of dark magic,
I found a work of art, a minute temple
Built by the hand of man.

Astorre

What was it like?

Ormann

All in good time. From afar it seemed
A heap of chance stones, like the other rubble
Rolling chaotically to the lake.
But soon I came upon the narrow entrance
Between two unhewn pillars of basalt,
Crowned by a lintel of the same ancient stone.
I entered in. The walls of the hollow room
Were made of blocks cyclopean, unhewn,
Unmortared, but set true by line and compass.
I found a block set up within this temple,
Nearly a perfect circle, of obsidian
To judge from splinters, out of one great piece
Chiselled. I struck a light, and there appeared
The image of the sun, cut deep upon
Its upper surface. The ball was a round bowl,
The rays ran grooved out to the very edge.
One only of these grooves, more deeply cut,
Broke through the circling border of the stone.
Here flows the sacred sacrificial blood,
And, over-running, pours itself upon
Poor damned humanity, which with awe receives it.

Astorre

It makes me shudder somewhat.

Ormann

Well, this was
The dark side of my tale: now comes the other.
I will not weary thee with the piles of skulls
And caves of human bones that I have seen,
But thou shalt with amazement learn of that
Incomprehensible and unheard-of wonder
Which when I summon to remembrance makes
My bosom heave to bursting. Laugh an thou wilt,
I saw up yonder—yea, what did I see?—
A woman! Olive-skinned, thou thinkest? Nay,
Hast missed the mark by far. Laugh me to scorn,
Say I am mad! But I do swear to thee
Upon the body of God my words are true.
I saw a woman, young, and white of skin.
Was she one of the daughters of men? O, that
I cannot tell. Truly, I thought her more.
If I say she had sandals, bow and quiver,
Thou thinkest of the goddess Artemis,
And dost believe I saw a marble statue
Like those that grace the palaces at home.
Yea, thou art right. But 'twas a living statue.
It was of flesh and blood and not of stone.
And therefore more, for life is more than death.
And this was not a figure shaped by man;
But, I would venture, issued from a God.
The wealth of bright hair shining round her head
That sat upon her like a golden helm
Bore witness that the Sungod was her father,
Helios himself. Thou thinkest I am mad?
That is the least thou canst believe. If so
I will stay mad, and dare the world to cure me.
Mayhap I was too hot: the toilsome climb
Worked fever in my blood. But what I saw

Was real, and not the phantasy of fever.
Speak not, for I will prove it to the hilt.
High in the blue above me was a speck
Which suddenly grew bigger, came quite near,
Disclosed itself as an enormous condor,
And all at once turned over and fell down
Heavily plumping on the earth. Then she came—
O what a light and what a royal spring!
What thighs, what glorious limbs, what supple movement!
With a great cry she sprang upon the eagle
A cry that echoed back a hundredfold.

Astorre

Ormann, I must break in upon thy words,
My friend and brother. Something comes upon me,
I feel it is austere and inexorable,
And its demands will brook of no delay.

Ormann

Astorre, friend and brother, what troubles thee?

Astorre

I had not interrupted thee, my Prince
King, friend, and brother Ormann: but it is
The brazen tolling of a bell within
Presaging ineluctably my end.

Ormann

Yea, but not now, not for a hundred years.

ASTORRE

In vain: let be, thou canst not alter it.
Thou hast returned with gladness from a portal
Thronged with departed souls, and with the souls
Of those who, still on earth, are half set free:
Among these was the soul of thine own friend.
Look at me not so dumbly and so stricken,
For only therefore do I hoard my time
That my end may not lie upon thy conscience
Heavy or sore, may foster no reproaches
To hinder thy spirit's flight towards the sun.
Know that I lived and I was happy since
Thou camest into my life, and not before!
And, if I go unwillingly from the world,
It is because I leave thee there behind.

ORMANN

What is a world to me where thou art not?

ASTORRE

Brother, thy sunny eye makes darkness light,
Makes the uncertain clear, yea, pierces through
With an inconquerable radiance
The black-browed sullen thundercloud of fate.
And see, illumined by this radiant beam,
I take my leave, happy, and travel upwards
Upon it. Ormann, I see what thou seest not.
I tell thee that this island overflows
With magic and with wonder. Thou thyself
Wilt hunt the huntress thou didst see today.
Thou hast sought none but her from thy youth up.
She was the unknown goal towards which thy being
Impetuously strove. Nor could thy guilt,

The heavy burden of thy sin, avail
To hinder thee from landing on the shore
Of destiny. This is the appointed spot
For thee, the appointed goal. Whate'er betide
Of seeming ill to shake thy confidence
It is as I have said, not otherwise.

ORMANN

O, do not leave me.

ASTORRE

I abide with thee,
Even when I go from thee, radiant one.

ORMANN

If God has given thee vision in this hour
So tell me, did my father, ere he died,
Forgive me?

ASTORRE

I can see thy father.

[*He dies.*

ORMANN

Where?

DELLO

Louder, Prince, or you will get no answer.

ORMANN

Nay, but less loudly, do not call him back.—
Where was it that I first had sight of thee?

In the full splendour of a young spring morning.
Tapestries hung from every window, roofs
And balconies nigh broke beneath the weight
Of thronging folk. A coal-black stallion
With eyes like fiery devils carried thee:
That was when our two houses made a pact.
And then thou didst become my friend; wast dubbed
My knight by thy own hand upon an evening
When, drunk and gaming, I flew out in violence,
And thou didst take my deed upon thee straight.
My whole wild destiny thou didst take upon thee,
And now hast met thy end, tangled in troubles,
Far from the happy land of childhood, poor,
Shipwrecked upon a world-forgotten island
Within a rocky hole on filthy straw.—
But what is that? Music! Dost hear it, Dello?
A ringing magic seems to fill the air
As would it honour the poor clay that lies
So pitifully in this resting-place.
Nay, now I have it! It is thou, my friend,
Thyself, it is thy liberated soul
Quitting the body that makes heavenly music,
Giving a sign to me that thou art near.

[*Loud war-cries of Indians are heard, and mighty blows on the wooden door caused by arrows and spears shot into it. A spear-head that has pierced through the door flies in.*

DELLO

You hear a sound from heaven? I don't, Prince Ormann.
Or hell surmises there are angels here
And comes with devil-spawn to smoke them out.

[*Renewed howling of savages.*

Ormann

A dreadful noise, what is it?

Dello

Bucking goats,
Wild pigs, and cats, and bulls, and dogs, and cocks
Come in a crowd, it seems, to visit us.
But, in good earnest, we are done for now.
I know this clamour and this bellowing.
The island is the home of cannibals,
And they have smelt us out: all's over with us,
We're only victuals. Well, God bless the meal!

Lapo

Prince Ormann, murderers, thieves, my crucible!
My gold! The devils steal my crucible!

Ormann

It is the end? I would say yea to that,
Dead comrade, had I not thy prophecy
In mind, even though it be ambiguous,
For on the shore of destiny to land
Can also mean, to die, and death can be
An appointed goal . . . But 'tis all one to me,
Thou gavest me with thy prophecy an example
That makes me ready for all contingencies.

Amaru

[*Invisible, from without.*
Ye white men, here without stands Amaru.
Here stands with his war-eagles Amaru.
With his war-eagles, with his jaguars.

He is a warrior, he is inconquerable.
Nevertheless, peace offers Amaru.
With oaths and pledges to bind you to himself
Is the great wish of Amaru. Give answer.

Dello

Out of my wits, I am, Prince, hold my head.
Does not the scoundrel speak in our own language?

Ormann

A miracle, Dello, by almighty God.

Dello

This island is bewitched, upon my life.
Listen! The scoundrel yells again: be quiet.

Amaru

[*As before.*

Give answer. My bloodthirsty jaguars
Tremble with rage. My royal eagles quiver
With lust for hunting. They will rend your flesh
With fangs, will rend your flesh with beaks and talons,
If ye reject the friendship of Amaru.

Ormann

And what can be the friendship of Amaru?

Dello

The island's cut loose from its moorings, Prince,
And swims in a sea of wine that's mulled with spice,

With cinnamon, cardamoms and malaga,
And thirst has made us drunk and light of head.

Ormann

Maybe. But open wide the door, Dello.
Let in the phantasies of our delirium,
Let in the orgies, kobolds, dreams that clamour
Before our stronghold. Only let them in.

[Dello *opens the door, and* Amaru *is seen standing bolt upright in magnificent war-dress of feathers, paint, and weapons. Behind him the thronging host of his warriors.*

Amaru

Yea, thou art he I look for, Tonatiu!
Thou art the true, thou art the only son
Of the golden God within the sun. But yet,
Perchance some magic is at work, divine one.
Truę, thou surpassest the Day-star in splendour,
The poisonous star whose light I hate like death;
But he is similar in kind, and thou
In the radiance of thy head art like to him.
Let it be so; I bow to thee in reverence.
[*He bends a knee.*

Ormann

If I am right, there lives a white man here
Who has instructed thee to speak our tongue.
If it do please thee, tell us more of him.

Amaru

Tales of him shall be told by Amaru.
He will tell tales about him, Amaru

Will tell you tales about him, but ere that
Bind yourselves close with sacred oaths and pledges
To Amaru's revengeful band.

ORMANN

On whom
Will Amaru, the warrior, take revenge?

AMARU

He will from the white Satan's countenance
Tear the priest's mask, yea, Amaru will show
That he is not a son of God, but rather
Son of an unclean dog, and Amaru
Will thrust the unclean dog's son from the throne.
[*He holds out a wooden sacred image.*
Here is the almighty god of vengeance, Nama.
Inconquerable is the demon Nama.
My jaguars are like sand on the sea-shore,
And my war-eagles, that have sworn themselves
To vengeance and to Nama. Whether thou
Hast fallen from the sun, or hast arisen
Out of the sea, or if thou art but human,
Mingle thy blood with my blood, and say Nama,
Fulfil with us the ceremonial customs
And lead us against the accursed one. May he
Fall headlong into the sea of utter darkness.
Then be thou ruler of this land, and take
The empty throne to thee, says Amaru.
[AMARU'S *warriors beat on their shields, and raise a cry of delight.*

ORMANN

O apes and popinjays of my destiny:
Who makes such terrible mockery of me?

AMARU

It is no mockery, here drops red blood,
For the oath it drops from the arm of Amaru.
His arm has Amaru cut for the oath,
And food for wolves or vultures will he be
Who deviates even by one hair's breadth
From such an oath.

DELLO

Here is a knife, be quick
And cut your arm, my Prince. You must know
well
How it is done, remembering old scenes.
And why the devil need you think it over?
You lay in the grave, and the first shovelful
Of earth already scattered down upon you.
You heard the sexton belching as he sucked
His brandy-flask. Is that not so? And now,
With one throw you are vomited into life,
You fly, you shout aloud in flight for joy,
And sit upon a throne as were you nailed to it.
Good! Excellent! Your blood is mingled now.
'Tis done: for life and death you are sworn
brothers.

ORMANN

The power of Satan is terrible. But now
One goal was set for me by God, I thought,
Instead the devil brings me to another.
And even now God took a brother from me—
Astorre, O Astorre, shining seraph!—
In order that a swarthy son of hell
Might take his place.

Amaru

Say Nama!

Ormann

Yea, I will.
Nama I say, and Nama do I swear!

THIRD ACT

In the valley of the temple of sacrifice. The interior of a great tent of skins. The middle one of three square compartments into which it is divided by tapestries and other hangings. The two others are indicated right and left by a curtained door leading into each. The curtains and hangings which form the middle space are decorative old Indian pieces worked with coloured feathers and much gold ornamentation. There is a great sun of gold, and a silver moon, also of ancient workmanship. Bizarre and antique images are wrought everywhere. Everything is on a magnificent and royal scale. On a table, covered with brocades, there are books and instruments. The back wall of the room consists entirely of heavy curtains which are looped to one side and afford a view of a lofty mountain region. A volcano covered with eternal snow dominates all the peaks. Single thunderclouds roll slowly among the peaks with low mutterings: light convulsions and quakings can be perceived among the rocks. PROSPERO *in the attire of an Indian priest-king sits at the table, sunk in contemplation.*

PROSPERO

Dreadful Creation, ever generating,
That prodigally spends itself in shaping

Whatever dies again!—Dreadful Creation,
Striving for ever unfulfilled, and drawing
Its water in a sieve!—Dreadful Creation,
That shapes a creature such as I am, wakes it
To the mazed images of a dim half-sleep,
And gives it glimpses of another world
The world of sleep, unfathomed, unawakening.
Or is this rock-bound earth, perchance, awake?
Perchance, because I say that life is movement,
And the sea moves, the mountain, the lava-stream,
Lightning and leaping flame and rolling cloud?
We call that Life which we behold, but yet
With deeper right I call it sleep, yea, death.
Dreadful Creation, that on magic suckles us
So that we must have dreams, and wraps them round
Our estranged limbs like veils, until our being
Is mazed still further beyond hope of succour.
But is there aught that mazes not our souls?
Mother, why hidest thou thyself, and yet
Art visible everywhere in thy grievous magic,
So hot and cold, so cruel and so loving,
So lasting and so fleeting, so infinite
And yet so straitly prisoned, a reflection
Of hopelessness, and yet at the same time
Of the utmost hope? Why dost thou blend together
The reek of corpses and the breath of flowers?
And changest overnight one to the other?
Show me a fruit of God that does not rot!
Dreadful Creation: why dost make murderers
Of man and beast? And to the bringer of death
Dost grant his life? Him who is born of death
Thou makest a death-dealer! Dreadful Creation,
That hatches sorrow from the egg of joy

And fleeting joys out of the egg of sorrow . . .
That, in a word, breeds magic and illusion.
She shows us trifles that become enormous,
She broadens past and futures out to landscapes
Illimitable before us and behind:
And all the illusion of a single moment
So small and fleeting that one cannot grasp it,
And yet the same as an eternity.

[*He bows his head and falls asleep.* Tehura *comes in from the left, looks closely at him as he sleeps, takes a feather fan and fans him gently.* Oro *enters from outside.*

Tehura

The king is sleeping.

Oro

May his sleep be holy,
A sleep in which his doubts are solved by heaven.

Tehura

It is no natural sleep, my father. Leaden
It falls upon him like a second death.
Speak loud. No words avail to waken him.

Oro

Do thou speak, daughter. For why am I here?
Thou knowest what a sorrow troubles me.

Tehura

The folk must wait in patience, father, till
Enlightenment from heaven falls on its son,
And from the son sheds radiance on all heads.

Oro

Look thou up yonder. The valley of death
shimmers
With motley men among their motley tents,
And ever and anon all eyes are turned
Towards us here, towards the craggy platform
On which the holy tent of the priest-king
Arises. The impatience of the throng
Increases, and their number, daily growing,
Has well-nigh doubled itself since we marched out.

Tehura

Well, and what more, my father?

Oro

'Tis today
The third and last day set for the sacrifice,
And yet nought stirs about the temple lake,
Nothing is set in motion for the festival,
There is not even a beginning made.

Tehura

Let them play ball, or let them play patolli.
Let the masked dancers leap and swing their
rattles.
And the buffoons, why do they not make merry?

Oro

Thou art mistaken. The temper of the people
Is heavy, and turns not to mirth and games.

Tehura

Then slaughter sheep, encourage drinking bouts,
Share wine out . . .

ORO

Formerly thou wert wise, Tehura,
The spirit of Opu was breathed on thee.
Thy father's actions hast thou often guided,
For he perceived thy gift and bowed before it.
And so what now has happened came to pass:
As king I consecrated Tonatiu
And gave thee to him, since thou hast no brother,
That thou should'st bear a son; our future king,
Sprung from his blood and mine. But yet he keeps thee
Untouched and chaste, and what thou sayest to me
Grows ever stranger and more unreadable.

TEHURA

That may well be, my father.

ORO

True, down yonder,
'Tis flesh that the folk crave, but flesh divine!
And drink they crave: but more than wine to drink.
Blood! Blood divine! And living bread of atonement!
That is the meal for which the folk are hungering,
And what will happen if they are denied it?

TEHURA

Is thy faith grown so feeble, father?

ORO

Nay,
But wherefore does the Magus not step forth

At last, and give the signal for beginning
The solemn, yearned-for, sacred ceremony?
Why is nought done? What are we waiting for?

Tehura

What are we waiting for? The miracle.

Oro

Truly, it well-nigh needs a miracle
To clear away the sullen-closing clouds
That in the sky pile riddles charged with destiny,
For where is Yakka, where the daughter of heaven
Whom he bore on his arm out of the sea?
She shuns him. Hither too she has not followed,
But obstinately holds herself aloof.
And Amaru, the madman Amaru,
Who once was like his shadow, where is he?
He who obeyed the Magus' lightest nod
And seemed to live but in his countenance!
He is devoted to the demon Nama,
And many of our best warriors with him.
And that is what is troubling the folk's spirit.—
Through the camp's bustle there are creeping rumours
That, breathing a dire vengeance, Amaru
Has fallen upon the low ground by the river,
Has burned the villages and laid them waste
Since we came to the mountains with our train.

Tehura

If Amaru leaves such a track behind him
Woe to him in that hour when bursts the cloud
Of destiny with power upon the people.

PROSPERO

[*Awaking, prophetically.*

Oro, now it is clear. I saw the offering!
Ne'er did thy knife slay such an offering.
Already it is near. Await the offering!

[PYRRHA *stumbles in to* PROSPERO'S *feet, breathless, her garments torn, her hair flying.*

PYRRHA

Father, I am pursued! Hard on my heels
Are hunters, hunting me like a wild beast.
I was surrounded, but I have broken through.
They set on me. The voice of Amaru
I could distinguish, yelling in the ravines,
Urging the hunters on to wilder running.
But I was swifter, and outstripped them all,
Save only one . . .

PROSPERO

I know him!

PYRRHA

One alone,
Not to be shaken off, was at my heels.
My blood ran cold whenever I looked round.

PROSPERO

Look not behind thee, then: he is still there.

PYRRHA

Where?

[*She look quickly round.*

Prospero

Dost thou see him? No? Let me describe him.

Pyrrha

I can see no one, father.

Prospero

Thou art blind.
He reached the tent with thee, at the same moment,
And stands at the entrance, hot and fuming blood.

Pyrrha

Seeks he to kill me?

Prospero

Nay, not thee, but me.

Pyrrha

But he that followed me was weaponless.

Prospero

Do thou decide, Tehura, look but yonder,
And, Oro, thou! Speak, is he not equipped?
Yet after all, ye see but empty air.
Glow not his eyes with lust for murder, like
Carbuncles?

Oro

Lord, thou art troubled by a dream.

PROSPERO

How powerful is a dream that so can trouble me.
Yea, call it but a dream, yet is this dream
The thousand-fold echo of horror and affliction,
A dream that a thousand times renews again
One and the selfsame deed of infamy,
Yea, that a thousand times to the same victim
Deals the death-blow by the same assassin's hand.
A dream by far more frightful than the deed
Which was its accursed cause. But now, enough.
So, Pyrrha, thou wert hunted like a beast,
And then didst find the way back to thy father.
For so long, Pyrrha, didst thou shun thy father
Till thou wert hounded to him like a beast.
Tell me more nearly of what has befallen thee.

PYRRHA

It is not noble, father, thus to wound me
With bitter mockery in the very moment
When I implore protection at thy feet.
If I am far from thee 'tis not my fault,
But hers, who has usurped my place beside thee.

PROSPERO

[*As* TEHURA *is moving away.*

Stay!

TEHURA

I am no usurper, illustrious one.

PROSPERO

Nay, of a truth. I know thee. Who could have
The front to lay such charge against thee? Thou

Art mild and gentle as a moonlit night:
And as for thee, do thou learn what she is.
Now, go and rest, for thou must be fatigued,
Let us be rid of the phantoms of our race,
Of which I am an heir, even as thou.

[Peteto, *a young warrior, rushes in, at the end of his strength.*

Peteto

King, fire and murder! On our villages
Has fallen the bloody rebel, Amaru,
Ravaging, spoiling, like a thundercloud
He burst with all his legions on our fields.
Their cry is Nama, Nama! And he it is,
The terrible Nama, who is leading them.
The mighty demon-wizard is disguised
In the very shape and figure of Tonatiu:
Round his white face flicker red tongues of fire,
And from his hand the deadly lightnings dart.
He is streaked with blood. He bellows. He spares not
The unborn child within its mother's womb,
Nor aught else that was ever born of woman.

Prospero

Be silent, take thy breath, then speak more slowly.

Peteto

O king, to arms, to arms! The call to arms!
Tell me not to be silent, let me scream
To call men to the battle, for the wolves
Panting for blood are close upon my heels.
And while I struggle here for lack of breath
Assuredly they burst into the camp

Already, with the demon at their head,
To blot us out completely from the earth.

PROSPERO

Dost thou perceive it, Pyrrha? So I named thee
Because, out of a flood that swallowed up
All that I had, a second Deucalion
Thee only did I rescue in my ark.
Dost thou perceive that now a second flood
Has risen inscrutably and washes round
The hard-won mountain-tops of my existence?
Mark well, the flood will soon submerge the peaks;
There is no ark can help me to withstand it.

[*Into the tent, after a preliminary clamour of mass-fighting, there bursts* ORMANN, *heated and disfigured by dust, blood and war-madness.* AMARU *and his warriors follow.*

ORMANN

[*To* PROSPERO.

Thee do I seek!

PROSPERO

If me thou seekest, here am I.

ORMANN

Thee do I seek.

PROSPERO

And I am here: thou seest!

[ORMANN *gazes fixedly in dumb amazement into* PROSPERO'S *eyes.*

PROSPERO

Thou'lt have my kingdom, the vain trifle: take it.

[*He tears the crown from his head and flings it at* ORMANN'S *feet.* ORMANN *sinks to the ground as if felled by a club. Amazement and horror seize upon all. Then a panic breaks out, and in wild confusion the native warriors flee, shrieking and throwing their weapons away. Only* AMARU *does not flee, although he is in the grip of horror and fright.*

ORO

Who is now stronger, serpent Amaru,
The herald sent from God, or thou and Nama?
There lies thy devil Nama. Up, and help him.

AMARU

My life is forfeit: cast me into fetters.

[PETETO *and other newly-arrived warriors of* PROSPERO *do so.* AMARU *is led quickly away.* PROSPERO *seems to have been struck rigid in the moment when he threw down the crown. For some time no one dares to disturb him by speaking to him.*

ORO

[*Breaking the silence.*

Lord, thou hast terribly displayed thy power,
Command, O noble one, what is to happen.

PROSPERO

Oro, what have I done?

ORO

Deeds that are godlike.

PROSPERO

Tehura, help me: what has happened to me?
Why has the world turned black about me? Why
Has a clammy sweat broken out o'er all my body?

ORO

The power that he emitted is too strong
Even for the very soul that harbours it.

[PROSPERO *is supported on one side by* TEHURA, *on the other by* ORO. *They guide him in this fashion into the next room. There remain behind, besides the unconscious* ORMANN, PYRRHA *and* PETETO.

PYRRHA

[*Not turning her eyes away from* ORMANN.
Peteto!

PETETO

Yakka!

PYRRHA

Thinkest thou he is dead?

PETETO

Lightning shot from the breast of Tonatiu
Yakka, and struck him down.

Pyrrha

But this man here,
If I am not asleep and at the mercy
Of a deluding dream that clouds my senses,
Is also a Tonatiu.

Peteto

Yea, in appearance.

Pyrrha

Go, lay thy hand upon his breast, and feel
If his heart beats.

Peteto

But it is certain death
To lay a finger on the demon Nama.

Pyrrha

I tell thee that he is a Tonatiu,
Of blood as pure as mine and as my father's.

Peteto

The devil Nama is a spiteful wizard,
And he can take whatever shape he chooses,
And doth confound whoever looks upon him.

Pyrrha

If I could only turn my eyes away;
He keeps them fixed upon him by his magic.
Thou'rt right: my soul is utterly confounded.

PETETO

Approach him not. He feigns death. He is alive.

PYRRHA

He is not dead. I know he cannot be dead.
Bring water, so that we may bathe his forehead
And moisten his parched lips.

PETETO

I go for water,
But 'tis for thee I bring it, not for him.
[*He goes.*

PYRRHA

What shall I do now, and what leave undone?
To whom shall I repair in my heart's need?
He lives. He is a man of flesh and blood,
Cast hither on a course that's all awry,
Shipwrecked and hunted as we were ourselves.
Only, he has committed crimes, has murdered,
Hounded me like a beast, and had the will
To drive my father exiled from his throne.
He did not come unto us as a suppliant;
Robbery was in his tread, and bloody violence.
Why did I well-nigh faint even to think
This savage monster might be dead, or would
Expiate his crimes beneath the headsman's axe?
And what was in my father's wondrous deed
That made me think it not so wonderful
When he threw his crown at the strange robber's feet?
And had he picked it up and pressed it down
Into the golden river of his hair,
By God, I would have cried aloud for joy.

But, as it was, when my father's magic power
Felled him so pitifully in his dread radiance
Why did the vein upon my temple swell?
It lacked but little, and I would have strode
Before him as he lay to hurl wild words
Of hate and anger in my father's face.

[Tehura *has come in, and stands expectantly in front of* Pyrrha.

Tehura

Is this the same man that upon the island
To thee before all others showed himself
The day that thou didst kill the giant eagle?

Pyrrha

He is the man. And by Opu I swear
I will not suffer anyone to injure him
Or in the smallest trifle to offend
His godhead. If I let it pass, be sure
Of this, that I myself am but a corpse.

Tehura

Is this man human, made of flesh and blood?

Pyrrha

What else?

Tehura

An illusion, that the demon Nama
Perchance contrived to overthrow thy father.

Pyrrha:

If so, then life itself is an illusion.

Tehura

Or if the Gods can war upon each other
And he that weeps within the ball of the sun
Has sons that quarrel, then this were, perchance,
A brother-god that hated his own brother?

Pyrrha

This radiant youth brother to an old man?
He, that but now with a titanic fist
Well-nigh smote through the heavy bronzen door
That shuts him from the treasure vaults of life,
The brother of worn-out Age, that sits and knocks
With heavy sighs upon the door of death?

Tehura

Thou thinkest 'tis no creation of the Magus
Invisibly and mysteriously one with him?
As we are haunted oft by hostile shapes
That our own souls have made to torture us?

Pyrrha

This is a man, and not a phantom! He
Is flesh of my own flesh, blood of my blood.

Tehura

Thou too art a creation of the great Magus.

Pyrrha

How so?

Tehura

Why, therein, that he is thy father.

Pyrrha

But this is not my brother, nor my father.

Tehura

What then?

Pyrrha

I know not.

Tehura

Then is he more to thee.—
Yakka, thou lovest me not: in truth, divine one!
Of the exiles on this island thou indeed
Art furthest from thy rightful realm removed.
Thou wearest thy beauty like a punishment.
Here is another of thy noble kin,
But under what calamitous star has he
Been spilled upon our island by the ocean?
Thou doubly now forlorn, if he is dead,
Thou doubly ruined now, if he yet lives!

Pyrrha

What insults and what threats are these?

Tehura

O, Yakka,
Let us consider if perchance we know
How to encounter the most desperate hour,
That mighty magic written in the stars
Which forges into one two fatal words
That ne'er should be united: "found" and "lost."—
True, thou hast called the king an aged man

That feebly knocks upon the door of death,
But thou hast seen how, when he seemed to cast
His power away, it yet abode with him,
And he to whom he cast it is still maimed.—
Ne'er have I seen him as he was today.
Darting forth fire. But the first lightning flash
Is only a herald of the coming thunder.
He grinds his teeth, and writhes with rage for blood.

Pyrrha

Then there will be a battle of the Gods.

Tehura

Nay, there is nothing here to hope from violence,
But much from mercy, yea, and more from love.
Go, doom has been pronounced on this offender;
They come to make it known to him. If thy father
Perceives thee here, and if thou canst not master
Completely thy defiance and thy words,
So wilt thou the more certainly destroy
The man thy destiny urges thee to save.

[Pyrrha *bursts into despairing sobs, covers her face with her hands and rushes out.*

Tehura

[*Advances towards* Ormann, *who is still unconscious, and looks at him searchingly. Suddenly she presses both her hands to her heart.*

Thou art he! Art thou truly? Yea, and yea!
Where else couldst thou have sprung from, O young lion,

But from the lion's loins? O proud, proud mother,
Privileged to carry thee within her womb,
To give thee birth, to suckle thee at her breast!
O happy mother!—How he lies there! Not
As if he had been felled by a strange magic
But by the surging waves of his own blood.
So sinks the volcano under its own flames,
Or vomits streams of molten metal like
A river into its own fair paradise.
So is the raging giant stupefied
By the divine fury of his mighty rage.

ORMANN

[*Opens his eyes, sees* TEHURA, *half rises up.*
Astorre, Dello! Are you there? Where are you?
What burden lies upon me, or what dream?
Astorre! Ah, he is no more, he is dead.
Come to thy senses, Ormann, collect thy wits.
Here is a clue to guide thee through the labyrinth.
But slowly, not too fast. Astorre died.
How did he die? Hold fast, my brain, and burst not.
Yea, he did die. What happened after that?
Magic! Who is it that died, Astorre or Ormann?
I entered then the circles of damnation.
Sputtering brands. Murderous fire-brands. Flames
That dry the freshly spurting blood: that dry it
Hissing and crackling. Nama! What is that?
The Prince of darkness. Where is Amaru?
Accursed changelings of my soul.—Help, help me!
Help me! Must I then come to such an end?

TEHURA

Drink this wine, stranger. Come to thyself.
Drink.

ORMANN

[*Striking the beaker out of her hand.*
Pestilence? Hateful Satan, get thee gone;
Why dost thou stand in the cellars of my spirit
Not to be rooted out, and glarest fixedly,
And pilest rage and horror on my soul?
Where is the other?

TEHURA

But what other, stranger?

ORMANN

[*Passionately.*
The other! Hearest thou not? Who else, the
other!

TEHURA

I know not whom thou meanest.

ORMANN

Dog, the other!
The other! O, thou misbegotten of hell!

TEHURA

Come to thyself, thy ravings are not good,
Only, thou speakest in fever, and thou art
Nearly related to the holy star,
To the highest of all whom we do reverence;
And see, if thou wilt tell me who she is
That thou hadst rather seen instead of me . . .

ORMANN

Believest thou I had forsworn myself
With Nama for thy sake, with Amaru
Had mingled blood, had burned and murdered
And raved in senseless madness like a bloodhound?

TEHURA

Didst thou do that?

ORMANN

Assuredly I did.

TEHURA

Was she a woman like me for whom thou didst it?

ORMANN

If thou a woman art, then was she none!
Then was she rather a goddess, and divine.

TEHURA

Where didst thou see her first?

ORMANN

Within the valley
Of death.

TEHURA

Where we do meet each other, all of us.

ORMANN

What sayest thou?

TEHURA

Nought. The goddess hast thou then
Hunted as if she were a hind—or not?

ORMANN

It may be so. How knowest thou that?

TEHURA

I know it.

ORMANN

Knowest thou still more? How? What?

TEHURA

It may be so.

ORMANN

Something dawns on me. Let me think.

TEHURA

Yea, do so.

ORMANN

Did not a white-skinned man stand here?

TEHURA

He did;
White is his skin, but whiter is his hair.
Happiness, grief and wisdom have bleached it white.
Who touches it is blinded by a jet
Of burning flame shot from his aching breast.

ORMANN

What does that mean? And that was he, the traitor?

TEHURA

He is called traitor only by Amaru
Since Amaru was treacherous to me.

ORMANN

Woe, woe! In what confusion fell my spirit!
Now of a truth I founder for the first time.
Giddy I stand upon the edge of the world,
Upon the brink of madness. Or am I buried,
And round me is my sepulchre, and art thou,
O basalt maiden, my basalt monument,
That darkly silent tells my epitaph?
Then rather speak to me, my monument!
Speak, even if thou art stone. I am a corpse.
And why should stone not speak, if a dead man speaks,
And both are lonely, and thrown on each other
For time and for eternity? Have mercy!

TEHURA

Thou livest. Thou liest in no other grave
But that wherein we all draw breath. And thou
Art overstrained from battle. In this battle
Thou comest not off victorious. Amaru
Has led thee astray, deceived thee, lied to thee.
He lies fast bound and rigid, like a beast,
In the dungeon of the temple underground.
Thou also art a prisoner, and but now
Thy doom was spoken. Thou art guilty! And

Instead of expiating thy old sin
Thou hast piled up new sin upon the old.

ORMANN

What pratest thou of old sin and of new sin,
Upon this island I can have no judge.

TEHURA

Thou hast a judge; thyself hast sought him out
Through wind and wave of all the seven seas,
And now art wholly in his sacred hand.

ORMANN

I am a white man, half divine, I am
A lord, a son of the sun, a Tonatiu,
And lift this crown up from the ground, the which
The medicine-man, the wizard, threw to me.
Let us see now who is a judge of others.

[*He has discovered the crown which* PROSPERO *threw at his feet, and which still lies there, takes it up and sets it on his head.*

TEHURA

[*Wringing her hands.*

O radiant one, thou art a Tonatiu,
But, though a God, against Gods hast thou sinned.
The doom has been pronounced on thee: accept it.

ORMANN

Dost think that Gods are to be judged with halters?

TEHURA

Accept thy doom, O splendid one; it is
A judgment passed by Gods and not by men,
And he on whom it falls is made divine,
And suffers neither shame nor shameful death.
It leads thee to effulgence, to omnipotence,
Though also to the sacrifice, to death.

ORMANN

I will not die.

TEHURA

Be patient, be submissive,
Resign thyself to thy fate: for only thus
A miracle may happen to prevent it.

ORMANN

Nought of submission, never! What is that?

[*The dull beat of drums resounds to a monotonous flute accompaniment. A procession of Indian children, youths, and men appears, all bedecked and crowned with flowers. The children head the procession followed by* HUEMAC *and* MATZATZIN *swinging censers, then by* ORO *in the full panoply of a High Priest. Behind him pace reverend figures, old priests of the temple, also in full dress, and after them a pious throng of Indians. In a ceremonious circle they surround the bright figure of* ORMANN, *who with glowing eyes but not without wonder*

gazes at the spectacle. Gradually they arrange themselves in a semi-circle before him. Huemac *and* Matzatzin *kneel down; the others follow suit.*

Oro

Thou son of God, thyself divine, who hast
Descended from the sun, we give thee greeting!
Thy coming have we fervently awaited,
O fortunate, radiant one, and now thou art
Among us. See, the peaks that circle round
At thy command are steeped in light serene.
All restless omens in the earth and air
That heralded thy coming now are still.
Do thou look down with mercy on thy people,
Terrible one! Didst thou not fare from heaven
Like a devouring fire? Did there not flicker
Like serpents golden flames about thy head?
Nevertheless, how else could a God incarnate
From fiery heavens pass through the accursed land?
And yet thou art all love and loving-kindness.
We are full of guilt: and with us the whole people.
With deep anxiety did we supplicate
For the portentous hour of purification.
And as it tarried, as the miracle,
The star of the covenant, would not stoop to us,
As the incomprehensible love of God
Seemed to deny itself,—then all at once
Rang through the world the echo of thy coming.
This time not silent and mysterious,
Nor in the humble garb of lowliness
Didst thou appear unto thy banished people:
Nay, in the garb of terror didst thou come
This time before our king and priest, demanding

With mighty words that he should yield his crown.
Sweep back the curtains! Open wide the house,
So that no longer in the valley of death
The people pine in miserable waiting.
Show them the godhead, who has crowned himself,
Chosen to be the offering of atonement.

[*Curtains are pulled back. The mighty mountain landscape is disclosed dominated by the smoking snow peak. The joyous clamour of the people is heard breaking out.*

Oro

[*Stepping before the tent, and speaking to the folk.*
Rejoice! He has appeared! The radiant one,
The God that is all mercy! On your face,
Into the dust with you! He, overladen
With the heavy burden of your sins, will bathe
In the lake of death, and purify your souls.
And that his love eternal ye shall never
And nevermore forget, the immortal one,
The Lord of Heaven, will offer up himself,
Will give his flesh and blood upon the block
Once more to expiate your guilty sin.

Ormann

Astorre, art thou near me?

Oro

Yea, God is!
Dance, sing! God is, and he forgets you not.
The lake of death will be the river of life,

And who partakes of flesh and blood of godhead
He eats and drinks eternal blessedness.

[A great clamour of joy arises. At a sign from Oro *the kneeling Indians rise, and the procession marches out as it came.*

Ormann

[Takes off the crown and looks at it.
What are ye, crowns?

Oro

Rejoice ye, dance and spring!

FOURTH ACT

In the temple of sacrifice. The room with the altar-block. This is placed in the middle, is made of obsidian, and looks like the drum of a great pillar. The walls are constructed of cyclopean squares of lava. The room is planned rectangularly; one of the long sides forms the back wall. To the right there is a narrow stone passage leading into the open: to the left a narrow bronze door which is shut and which is the entrance into a dark dungeon, hollowed out. In the back wall there are small bronze doors, also shut. There is besides an open hole into an underground cavity.—Skulls and bones are lying about. There is an ever-burning lamp over the altar. A bronze door in the back wall is opened. TEHURA *appears with a burning torch. She lets* PROSPERO *enter, and then shuts the door.*

PROSPERO

[*Stands still and looks about him.*

So here I am, led by my gloomy genius.
And this is then the place, reeking with horror
And with ill-fame, that waits for all of us.
Of my own free will I enter it. True, Tehura,
I have thee with me, thou dusky golden image

Of life, and I am warmed through with the fruit
Thou gavest me in this most blessed night,
This night of bitter pain and bliss ecstatic.
My spirit lay in death. My body was numb
And rigid. Then a glow enwrapped me round,
The dusky glow of love surrounded me,
And o'er my face, that streamed with tears, there flowed
A river of black hair, thy hair, caressing me
With spicy odours and sweet essences
Of all warm flowers. And lo! the living bronze
Of thy soft body waked me from the dead.
Hot youth ran coursing through my veins again,
And like a bee I sucked a heady draught
Of life from the red flower of thy mouth,
Nigh swooning in its dewy opening blossom.
Thou mate and mother of men! Mother to me,
Giving me birth anew, and wife and sister—
The sought-for blessed island of my life.—
What now to me is this dread place, and how
Do I despise its terrors since my soul
Is armoured with so much of bliss profound.
And yet—it was the will, not of myself,
But of another who makes use of mine
As of a glove! that I must leave behind
The sources and warm meadow-lands of life
And in this cold cave, dark and smelling of death,
Approach the source of death, whose icy flood
Flowing in channels hence streams over all
That glows and lives: its ice can not be seen
But everywhere, ah, everywhere is felt.
The very beggar-bowl, although its gifts
Burn with blue flame and shower sparks, contains it.

[*Drums, tam-tams and conch-horns are*

heard both near at hand and farther away.

The dance begins. Hark, they already greet
The bloody dawn of the day of sacrifice.
Thinkest thou that they know whom they are offering?

TEHURA

They know it not. But, noble and beloved one,
Thou never wilt permit it. They will not
Offer in sacrifice that which is thy blood.

PROSPERO

Thou sayest it:—the sacrifice is my blood—
It is ten years since I was driven out.
But they are like the turning of my hand.
Was it today? Or yesterday? My memory
Ruthlessly summons everything before me;
It spares me not a detail the most trifling
Out of those dreadful days of my overthrow.
We fled. The princess died. Died by the wayside.
I took leave of a corpse, and to this day
I do not know who buried her, but only
Who murdered her. And that thou too shalt learn.
I was no longer young when I chose a wife
From among the princes' daughters of the land,
But in due time I had from her an heir,
Ormann. Thou hast not heard me speak this name
Which, for the first time since I came upon
Your island, is today upon my tongue.
Ormann! Ormann! It is as though a light
Blossomed upon my tongue, warming and shining

Through head and bosom with its bright radiance.
The child was born and christened. He grew
bigger,
Learned to say "father" and "mother," words
which he
Uttered as children do, but with more charm.
The yellow down upon his head became
A mass of palest golden gossamer
That framed in ringlets a most beautiful face
And flowed upon a neck most beautiful.
The boy became an Eros, and from Eros
He grew into that youthful hero Achilles
Who could be fitly hidden in girls' clothes.—
Who could be sated looking on him? Who
Having once heard his voice but wished to hear it
Again and again? His mother and I, who daily,
Yea, hourly took new pleasure in his charm
And in his presence, we were never tired
Of our delight in him. In outward seeming
Already he possessed every advantage
Of perfect shape and stature. Graceful, charming
He was, and wholly sensitive, but yet
What is much more, a calm and serious spirit
Glanced under his pure brow through eyes that
shone
Like stars, a spirit that captivated all,
Victoriously, and brought them to his feet.
Thoughts flashed like lightning, intuitions, words,
New-minted witticisms surprised us, rent us
With sudden laughter. To be sure, at times
His dashing moods drove him into mad tricks,
But yet we thought them ever wonderful,
Yea, godlike. Round the corners of his mouth
There sat audacious mischiefs: but he was
Moderate even in wantonness. In short,

So was he! That was Ormann! What he became,
Tehura, that thou now must learn. The time
Drew on when that melodious boyish voice
Grew deep and manly in his throat, and still
It was a music that drew all men to him.
So was the Prince in the young Ormann honoured,
But even more young Ormann in the Prince.
Both were adored and idolised, and both
Had young and old in the kingdom at their feet.
Poets sang praises to him. Famous masters
Of the brush and of the chisel honourably
Rivalled each other to immortalise
The godlike Prince and his beauty. Over altars
From many a masterpiece his face shines forth,
From many an intricate painting on the walls
Of palaces he greets the passer-by.
O these locks! And O that proud warm eye,
Treacherous and full of open fire! These cheeks
Downy with peach-bloom, and the innocent dimples
Lurking therein! That mild seductive smile
Married to a sweet air of melancholy
Around the eloquent mouth. How many nights
Have all these haunted me in dreams, or else
Thrust themselves on my lonely waking vigils
When I lay staring at the murky night.—
Thou hearest me panting huskily for breath.
It passes, let it be.—Now, to an end:
By his own gifts and brilliance led astray,
Infatuated by real and by false praise,
A tool in the hands of flatterers and villains,
Ormann fell. At his ear poisonous sycophants
Breathed into him the pestilence of ambition.
Rogues swung before him censers filled with weeds
Whose vapours maddened him. Brain-sick, distracted

With rage, he made resolve to turn upon
His father, whose deep love for him the bunglers
And lickspittles construed as bloody tyranny.
In a word, it was my son Ormann who drove me
From my throne, who banished me out of my kingdom,
Who hounded his father and mother through the gates
With rascally mobs, with cudgels, spears and dogs,
Who with unfilial cruelty, ruthlessly
Flung my heart and his mother's to the vultures.—
Thou seest me weep as I have never wept.

TEHURA

[*Falls before him, embraces and kisses his knees.*
O wonderful martyr that thou art! And also
Most happy of fulfillers. Yea, thou art
Weighed down with the sore burden of men's sins,
Innocent and a king, with head unbowed,
Thou enterest on the way of expiation.
Thou gatherest round thee, as a star its light.
Thy destiny, or art enwrapped in it
As in a royal purple robe embroidered
And stiff with golden pictures of thy life.
And so dost thou ordain what is and shall be.
O take me in a corner of thy mantle,
Thou ever good and great one, and no more
Let me go from thee, for in thee, beloved,
I must arise, and in thee pass away.

PROSPERO

"And so dost thou ordain what is and shall be."
Only in this one way, and only so!

Enduring what is alien, and fulfilling
With happiness what is most deeply mine.
Happiness, what is that? When to endure
And to fulfil are one in harmony.
Thou, seer, seest the magic mantle which
I wear in double endurance and fulfilment,
And hast an inkling whither in its folds
I must inviolably go. Thither I go
Where it will fall for ever from my shoulders.
Thou hast been with me, daughter of the sun,
According to thy word. And thou wilt pass
Away with me. So shall it be fulfilled,
Perchance, what I at one time asked of thee,
To find me out the place for my last sleep.

[Oro *in his priestly ornaments comes very ceremoniously through the main entrance.*

Oro

I knew that I would come upon thee here
In the very holy of holies.

Prospero

I have wished
With all my power that thou should'st come hither.

Oro

[*Lightly bending a knee.*
My lord, my daughter in this night has found
Favour before thy sight.

Prospero

And so art thou,
Who hast so often proclaimed thyself my son,

And art my brother, now my father too!
[*He raises him up, and kisses him on the forehead.* Oro *shudders.*

Oro

And thou, my God.

Prospero

I am no God.

Oro

Thou art.
Thou art a God and nothing less.

Prospero

But can
A God suffer so much? Can a God's breast
Be such a battle-ground for all the storms
That gather and discharge themselves in this
Ambiguous bright-gloomy universe?

Oro

It can, it must. Within his labouring breast
God bears the raging storms of each man's fate
Of his own free will, and takes upon himself,
The greater he is than we, so much the greater
Conflict and pain.

Prospero

What have I taken up
Of my own free will?

Oro

Thou offerest up thy son.

Prospero

How knowest thou that?

Oro

I know it.

Prospero

And 'tis so.
But, Oro, hear what I must now reveal
To thee. Upon this block of frozen fire
Which once flowed burning from the thundering sources
Of the volcano, I lay this parchment-roll,
Written by me. 'Tis sealed, and only thou
Mayest open it, Oro. Thou mayest open it
Then, and not sooner, when upon this spot
Before this block and thee the victim stands,
Immediately before the sacrifice.
Thou'lt give it to the victim, to the hand
Of him whom thou dost call my son, that he
May read it and proclaim it.

Oro

[*Takes the parchment, kisses it, and hides it in his robe.*

So let it be.

Prospero

And now: 'tis said, ere ye at last proceed
To the fulfilment of the sacrifice,

Dreadful and holy, that ye grant the victim
One quiet hour within this place of skulls
And blood, whence into the new heaven of light
His skiff is launched. And not till then ye lead him
Adorned with gold into the holy bath,
And then to death. I too have now fulfilled
This holy custom. I call thee to witness.

ORO

Thy words are full of darkness, son of heaven.

PROSPERO

Oro, farewell. We go into the heights,
My wife and I, together, and ascend
That mountain which ye call the fuming one.
That craggy peak, that spreads flames o'er itself,
And roaring spews out fire from icy jaws,
Is waiting for me. The holy giant who made
The solid kingdom of your valleys heave
And frighted you of nights with bloody light
And with his thunders, as he still does, he
Desires to hold a conference with your Magus.—
And that will happen, Oro, while down here
In the valley of death God makes his peace with you.
And until I return ye must do nothing
Save what is notified upon the parchment.
[*He touches the block.*
Thou second cradle, bloody cradle, thou
Cradle of dreadful death, farewell, farewell.
[PROSPERO, *whom* TEHURA *and* ORO *touch with awe, departs accompanied by them through the same door by which he*

entered. Pyrrha *comes in through the main entrance, looks shyly round, and then slinks to the bronze door on the left, which she sets open.*

Pyrrha

Faugh, nauseous slaughter-house! Disgusting den!
[*She calls into the open dungeon.*
Ho! Dello, Amaru! are ye still living?
Or are ye suffocated both down there?

Dello

[*Invisible.*
The savage sleeps. So thou dost come again?

Pyrrha

Yea, I hold ever to my word. Awaken him.

Dello

[*As before.*
At first the devil could not do enough
Of throaty brawling, which he called a song,
Of death, and now he lies there snoring deep
Unconscious as a stone and motionless.

Pyrrha

Up! For a moment lost means for thy Prince
For thee and Amaru that all is lost.
But if ye seize the moment all is saved.
[Amaru *springs out of the hole.*

Amaru

Here, daughter of heaven, here is Amaru.
Command: thou art the slinger! and the stone

That fatally hits the mark is Amaru.
Give orders, point him out his prey: thy dog
Eagle and jaguar is Amaru.

PYRRHA

So hit then, stone, the forehead of the Magus!
My dog and jaguar, tear him with thy teeth.
He is a monster, and no more my father.
Follow me! Have ye weapons? I will lead you
Surely and certainly. May a like surety
Guide the death-dealing steel to the enemy's heart.
If thou dost tremble, coward, I'll do it myself.
For know, I am sworn to Nama. In me burns
The hellish strength and rage of the demon Nama.—
And Nama's warriors, thy warriors, are
O Amaru, by me set free. They lie
In ambush, quivering with lust for battle;
They wait upon thy signal, Amaru!
Thou wilt goad them to anger, Amaru!
Wilt rouse them into madness, Amaru!
So break into the priest's train, Amaru,
Disorganise and scatter the procession
When it makes for the slaughter-house with its victim,
And snatch the son of the sun out from their midst.
I can hear footsteps; quickly down, get down!

[AMARU *disappears into the hole which* PYRRHA *closes. She hides herself.* HUEMAC *and* MATZATZIN *lead* ORMANN *in by the hands, like a blind man; his eyes are bound. The boy-priests carry garlands.* ORMANN *is hung round with chains of blossom.*

ORMANN

Whither, ye boy-priests, do ye drag me now?
And will ye not yet let me open my eyes?

HUEMAC

Soon, O thou heavenly one, we reach our goal.
This is the holiest of the ceremonies
Except the sacrament of sacrifice.
Once more thou wilt behold this world as man,
And in the place of its profoundest anguish
Wilt know this anguish in thy spirit before
Dying as man and God thou sufferest it.

MATZATZIN

How gladly would I stay here, Tonatiu,
To comfort thee in thy agony, to wash
The cold and bloody sweat from off thy forehead
While thou art still a man. But yet I dare not.

HUEMAC

As soon as we have left thee do thou take
Thyself the bandage from thine eyes.

ORMANN

Then go.

[*The two boy attendants depart with reverence, treading lightly.*

ORMANN

[*Slowly taking off the bandage.*

San Borondon! By God, I do suspect
That I have come into my blessed island

San Borondon!—The air is thickened here
With reeking exhalations, nauseous,
As if an execrated corpse were here
Sepulchred since eternities, to breed
Murder and plague and madness.
O, what is this?
The bandage and its twin blindness have fallen off,
And we, that, hungering for the source of light,
Trusted the guides who promised it to us,
We open our eyes to find ourselves in the grave?—
No, I believe, believe in San Borondon!—
This is a gloomy moment, to be sure,
Well-nigh a hopeless one! But I am bound,
So said my dusky executioners,
To see the sun once more before I die.
[*He feels the altar-block.*
But hold, what do I find? O hellish treachery,
How many bandages were before my eyes
Since only now, meseems, the real one falls?
Thou block of frozen fire, thou circular drum
Of agate covered o'er with images,
With the round sun cut into thy upper surface,
I know thee, I have seen thee once before
And touched thee not so many days ago;
This is the sun my executioners meant.—
Shine forth, then, if thou canst! Shine forth, and with
The trumpet-thunder of thy primeval light
With a mighty eruption burst this bloody cave
Of human disgrace and darkness! Thou canst not,
For everlasting darkness gave thee birth
And alone is born of thee. Thou wilt with blood,

My fresh-spilt reeking blood, in the deep basin
Hollowed out in thy middle, and in its rays
Grooved all around, but counterfeit the sun,
That holy star, and when with rattling bones
And idiot corpses squalling in their dance
Thou art surrounded, and I lie upon thee
Whimpering in my bonds, perchance, and whining,
Accursed stone, my murderer will call me
The golden God that weeps within the sun.
Wherever thou mayest be, weep, weep, O God!—
But soft, come to thy senses, Ormann. Thou
Hast often slain, hast often brought on others
Sorrow and death. Do thou, too, in thy turn
Strong and unflinching suffer death and sorrow.
Has not Astorre travelled on ahead?
And how could I forget that?—Ho, Astorre!
What consolation! What a gentle music
Thrills through me all at once. I feel thy presence.
In the cyclopean blocks are sounding strings
Of harps as golden as the sun.—Thou hast
Prophesied unto me. What was it? That
This island overflowed with wonder, and I
Would shortly hunt the huntress whom I saw
When she brought down the lamb-devouring eagle.
True! Both were true! Astorre, thou art here!

[Pyrrha *becomes visible.*

Ormann

[*Strides forward towards the apparition, with his arms outstretched, weeping and in ecstasy.*

Astorre, heavenly one!

PYRRHA

Stranger, thou dreamest!

ORMANN

O angel, angel of God, abide with me!

PYRRHA

I am no angel, no, thou godlike one:
Too sorely am I rent in twain with sorrow,
Racked through and through with pain and bitterness.
Know that I am the daughter of that man
Whose infamous decree has given thee
O God of light, as prey to savage knives.
He is no more my father, and no longer
Am I his daughter.

ORMANN

Cease not thy discourse,
Thou more than earthly music in my ear.
O let me still behold thy gliding motion,
Thou shining recollection of a moment
That was the happiest of my happy life.

PYRRHA

Let me be brief, then; we are pressed for time.
My father was a weakling. For that reason
Doubtless the world of white men thrust him forth,
And that is why he hates them to this hour.
Here too upon this island he remained
A weakling, living in dreams: for he has done
Nought else since storms of destiny drove him hither.
And so it happened that the High Priest Oro

Completely mastered him, a crafty savage,
Who needs him to consolidate his power.

ORMANN

By God, I cannot doubt it, thou art she
Whose arrow hit the eagle. Thou art the huntress,
The quick-footed hind whom I myself did hunt
So must the forehead of the goddess shine,
So must her eyes shoot lightnings near at hand,
So from her lovely head must ripple down
The cool golden fire of the Olympian maid,
The river of her hair. And it must lave
Even such a neck, and such celestial shoulders.

PYRRHA

I come to set thee free, to save thy life.

ORMANN

I am already freed, my life is saved.
And what a wondrous conjurer is Fate!
Was not this very place a sepulchre
Murky with horror? And now it glows with light.
Was everything not hateful, dank, disgusting,
And does not now excess of beauty, full
Of ambrosial magic, smite me to the ground?
Thy mouth shall ne'er have cause to call me
weakling!
[*He is beside her at a bound.*
So was I ever. And so am I now.
What could not hide the splendour of its beauty,
Even if cherubim with naked swords
Stood by to guard it, I have ever taken
With dauntless, resolute and ready hand.
[*He seizes her by the arms.*

Thou art a woman, even if thou art a goddess.
But I should like to see the man or god
That could avail to tear thee from me, ere
The last breath leaves my body, thee, the highest
Prize of my life. Loveliest of women, see,
How thy strength sinks away, how it deserts thee!
Yea, yea, what need of pride? of shame? resistance?
I burn, I thirst, I pant for thee! My strength
Is eaten away by longing. Saviour, save me!

[*He snatches her to him. She hangs unresistingly in his arms. He covers her with raging kisses. Complete embrace. Silence. Then a noise of drums and cymbals is heard approaching.*

Pyrrha

[*Awakes, tears herself away.*

They come; O we are lost! Deliver us!

[*She opens the dungeon door as before.*

Dello and Amaru!

[Amaru *springs out and stands near* Ormann.

Too late! Too late!

[Oro *appears through the main entrance, at the head of armed native troops.*

Oro

Seize the polluter of the temple, bind him.

[Oro's *command is quickly carried out, before* Amaru *is able to offer serious resistance.* Ormann *remains free, but like* Pyrrha *is surrounded by spear-points.*

I know not what events are brewing here,

Yakka, but 'tis thy holy blood that shields thee.
And the actions of the son of the sun are holy.
But know: it is prescribed by ancient statutes
If omens speak, and the diviners find
Therein a threat of hindrance to the sacrament
In any way by demons, in such case
The sacrifice takes place more speedily.

ORMANN

Filthy bloodstreaked idolatrous priest, be silent!
In vain have ye sought out your butcher knives
Of sharpest flint, not one of them will scratch
Even my skin. Thou fool, I well-nigh feel
The wind of God in the invisible sails
Of my destiny; it plays around me, see,
I laugh, and my breast is filled with its salt freshness,
And with triumphant blissful ecstasy.

ORO

O Tonatiu, thou'lt offer up thyself,
Thou wilt behold the holy knife at work,
And thy smoking heart pulsing in my right hand . .

ORMANN

Thou fool, thou butcher! Thy presumptuous hand
May pierce indeed the breast of a mangy dog
And hold a mangy dog's heart up to heaven,
On which the vultures of hell may sate themselves.
Mine is with armour sevenfold protected,
And what I now await from thee, await
Impatiently, full of presentiment
And anticipation of the deepest bliss,

Is a miracle, the great love of my life.
Throw down thy knife, for it is useless to thee.
Say rather what thou hast to say to me;
For see, I know that thou hast much to say.

PYRRHA

Thou'lt never lay a finger on him, never!

ORO

[*Growing uncertain.*

My answer, Yakka, touches him, not thee.
Stranger, thou hast reviled me, an old man
That before God and man fulfils his duty.
But since thou art what thou knowest not, so art thou
Safe from my anger. And in one respect
Thy words are justified: before thou diest
A revelation is due to thee: read!

ORMANN

[*Has taken the offered parchment ecstatically and almost involuntarily.*

He reads.

"Ormann, my son, the writing is known to thee."
The writing, the writing known to me? Nay, father!
"Thou didst so greatly hunger and thirst for life
That to thy soul it seemed as if thy hunger
Could only then be stilled if thou didst take
My flesh into thy mouth, and in thy cup
My blood."—O father, father, thou dost tear
The heart out of my breast, and holdest it
High towards heaven, palpitating, and
Thou dost expose its shame to the open sun.

Here it is written "Now live, for I do offer
Myself of my free will, gladly, for thee."
Where art thou, father? Never, O dear father.
O abba, abba! Father, father, father!—
"Show reverence to Oro, to my brother!
He will support thee, and the folk are good
And will submit to gentle government.
I write new revelations on bronze tablets,
Whoever finds them may he be worthy of them.
Ormann, now fare thee well. Pyrrha, farewell!
Create new life between you." O my father!
Where is my father? Give me room, make room!
He is a dead man who restrains me. Father!
Have pity! Give me room! I seek my father!

FIFTH ACT

A waste of stones, at a great height on the volcano. Its smoking summit can be seen in the background, covered with eternal snow.
PROSPERO, *leaning on* TEHURA, *climbs upwards.*

PROSPERO

Here let us rest ourselves. And what a prospect!
Around us the great vault of blue, whose rim
On high surrounds us. It is like a sea
Of universal waters. And we seem
But to sink deeper in its watery crater
The more we climb. Didst thou not seek to lift us,
O fiery mountain, to the roof of heaven?
And art thou dwindled to a mound? Nay, look
Downwards, Tehura, see how mightily
The mountain towers anew, how overpoweringly
He presses down his weight on the poor island
That as by magic holds the giant up
Above the flood. Now further, further upwards.

TEHURA

Thou didst desire to rest. Here let us rest
And enjoy what little food I brought with me.

PROSPERO

Good counsel, of a truth; I follow it.
[*He sits upon a block of basalt.* TEHURA

brings out bread and fruit, also a golden bowl and wine.

Rest, thou didst say. Yea, let us rest. The rest
That is the last before the last rest of all!
But is it really so? Nobody knows it.

TEHURA

Once on a time the folk from whom I spring
Thus named their greatest king "Nobody knows it."
And in our language that is "Indipohdi."

PROSPERO

Why did they name him so?

TEHURA

Not only because
He often used the word.

PROSPERO

And did he do so?

TEHURA

He did.

PROSPERO

And was he then a doubter?

TEHURA

Nay,
Not to know does not mean to doubt.

PROSPERO

Well then,
Did he but point his finger at that nothing
Which is everything?

TEHURA

He came out of that nothing,
And disappeared into it while still alive.
They said: whence came he? Whither did he go?
And for that reason too, since no one knew,
The world gave him the name of Indipohdi.

PROSPERO

The world?

TEHURA

My people once did rule the world.—

PROSPERO

I have some knowledge of king Indipohdi.
I thank thee for summoning his holy shadow
Through the beloved magic of thy words.
For after all, I am myself descended
From Indipohdi; I am an Indipohdi,
Who knows how to preserve with pious faith
The sacred doctrine.

TEHURA

He was ever full
Of melancholy.

PROSPERO

Full of that melancholy
Which like the lotus cup out of the depths

Of a motionless ecstatic gloomy lake
Mounts to the sun. It rises out of bliss
And sucks the sorrow of mortality
From the keenest joys of life. He need not die,
Since he ne'er lived, whom God has not considered
Worthy a holy tear of Indipohdi's.

TEHURA

[*Sings gutturally.*

Come into the halls of tombs, yea, come with me.
Into the royal tombs of my forefathers.
Ye will find urns, and dust within the urns.
O, Prince of peace, where art thou, king Topiltzin?
A hollow stone that hides your ashes bears
Your name. Your living breath, where is it gone?
Where is your voice, that made the peoples
tremble?
Where are your people themselves, where are
they? O,
Netzalcoyotzin, thou mightiest
Of monarchs, thou didst build for eternity
Palaces, gardens, waterfalls. Thou, like God,
Didst with a gesture form what in the air
Lives, and upon the earth, and in the earth,
And in the water, out of gold and stone;
Fishes, birds, men, and every kind of beast.
Lions reposed within thy gardens, made
Of stone. Tigers sprayed jets of water and fire
From the same gaping jaws. Tell me, where are
Thy workmen gone to, that were wont of mornings
In hosts unending to stream forth to work?
Whither are they gone? And where is what they
made?

Where is thy land, and where the laws thou gavest,
Which none among the people dared infringe?
Thy judgment-seat was called "God's judgment-seat!"
Where are they whom today thou still mayest judge,
And where art thou thyself, O royal judge?

[*At the high horizon of the sea the sun appears like an inverted purple bowl.*

PROSPERO

[*Has risen, and stands solemnly, completely bathed in the glow of the setting sun.*

Was I a king once, I am none today.
Not even so much a king as is contained
In the memory of what was. And was I once
A judge, today I think not even a thought
Which could pass judgment on another thought.
Did I sit at my spirit's loom, a weaver
Skilful to interweave with bloody hand
Threads from the spool of life, today I weave
No more. And I pluck off my handiwork,
The woven mantle of my soul, and cast it
Even as I cast this robe, its outer image.
Let him lay hold of it who can, and wear it.
'Tis a mantle full of magic: to be sure
I was a magician. In its folds it keeps
In magic co-existence my whole destiny,
Which he who throws it round him knows and bears
As I do. But it holds much more: I shaped
The world in which I lived, of that it gives

Sufficient proof. The act of the creation
Is there described, and therefore too the act
Of the creator. What I as demiurge
Created was suspended in my consciousness.
All that the mantle speaks of, and it tells
How I stood at the centre of the universe
In which each moment I surrounded myself
In the fury of creation with new spaces,
New worlds, and endlessly gave form and shape
To infinity, new-forming and re-forming it.
I created all I see or feel or taste,
All that I hear or smell or think. And nothing
That seethes and rumbles in this mountain's
bowels,
That shoots on noisy wings out of the air,
That smites or that is smitten, that devours
Or is devoured, the wolf, the lamb, nothing
Exists in the drama of this world which I
Myself have not endured, myself enjoyed.
Terrible war of elements, that I bore
So painfully, in love and hate. And now
This mighty universe falls away from me:
I leave it as a lover who bewails
The chaos that his own hand has created.
I am no more a magician, am set free
From working sorrow, and from sorrowful work.
But yet I fear that I am still a man.

TEHURA

[*Throws herself adoringly before him.*
No man; thou art divinity itself!
The God who weeps within the sun! O, thou
Effulgent one, vanish not now away!
I have been wife to thee, and humble servant,

Take me to heaven with thee in thy glory
Or else call down thy lightning to strike me dead.

PROSPERO

I am no more a king, nor yet a judge,
Nor a magician mingling truth and falsehood
Who claims a semi-divinity. I remain
Only a man. And see, Tehura, he,
The man, who frees himself from mother earth
In order to achieve the heights of death,
Has but strength left to suffer, not to do.—
And now turn back. The last stretch of the road
Which here begins, is but for one, for me.

TEHURA

So be it. Thy way is thine, and thine thy journey.
I have not wings of fire like thine to soar
Into the over-world. But through the gate
Of death I go with thee. From time to time
Thou didst call me thy soul, and that I am
Only so far as thou dost give me life.
And thus far my poor spirit is learned in thine,
But most of all my heart is learned. And so
My heart now speaks to thine, that it may answer.
Art thou quite ready to give up the world?

PROSPERO

Up yonder smokes the altar, and I am
The offering. I would be ill-prepared
If I should falter because some hope or other
Kept me still fettered to the temporal world.
Where hope is, there is fear. I hope no more,
And fear no more.

Tehura

Believe me, he will come.
My heart, that is thy heart, knows he will come.
Already I can hear the voice of thy son
Not with the ear, indeed, but with the soul.
I hear how he is crying Father, father,
Waking the echoes of all the steep ravines.
So cruel thou wilt not be, All-merciful,
To him or to thyself. Thou wilt not crush him
With the greatness of thy soul. He thought thee dead.
Thou didst arise before him, when he sought
Fantastic golden islands, as a judge
Not as a father recognised. And he
Is led to death, stands by the bloody block,
And all at once this glory breaks upon him,
As the concentrated light of a thousand suns
Can penetrate into an eye born blind.
It sees, and for a second time is blinded,
And blinded truly now, if not before.
O healer, be once more healer and Magus, Magus!
[*She puts the magic mantle again around him.*
Hinder that, let him keep his sight, if he
Must live in other ways. Remain thou man
Only till he lies once more at thy feet,
Broken and crushed, stammering self-accusations,
Till with his doubting and ecstatic hands
Incredulous-credulous he has seized upon thee,
The lost one that is found—remain so long
Till thy heart's love once more upon thy breast
Feeling the bliss of reconciliation
Has wept his joy and sorrow out.

PROSPERO

Tehura,
Thy words are strong, but they do not make me weak;
Woe to me were it otherwise!

ORMANN

[*Invisible, crying.*
Father!

TEHURA

That
Was Ormann's voice, thy son's voice.

PROSPERO

A delusion.

ORMANN

[*As before.*
Where art thou, father? Father! I am Ormann,
Am thy degenerate, thy accursed son!

PROSPERO

In this sound lies a spell that binds me fast.

ORMANN

[*As before.*
Father, no longer do I hound thee down
Like a wild beast. I lie now on thy trail
Like a damned soul upon its Saviour's trail.
I hate myself! And my accursed carcass
That runs and climbs with me, it has become
Nothing to me but a disgusting burden.

PROSPERO

O vain illusion, why did I entice
This frantic shadow to me in my last hour?
Thou martyred and tormented shadow, stay!
That is the pain engendered by this world,
Which snatches with its thousand arms at him
Who is nearly free of it, and seeks to entangle
Him in the net of life, that is, the net
Of disappointment and of misery.
Tehura, let us mount still higher, come.

[PROSPERO *climbs further up the mountain and disappears.* TEHURA *keeps him in sight but does not follow him. With a bound* PYRRHA *appears on a near-by pinnacle of rock.*

PYRRHA

Ah, thou art here.

TEHURA

I am still here: thou sayest it.
But wherefore art thou here? Whom dost thou seek?

PYRRHA

There is but one I seek upon the earth,
The radiant one, suckled on fiery essences,
Who like a runaway steed from the sun's chariot
Rushes along the ardent holy course
Of his life, and who when he is cold and dead
Will leave me cold and dead behind.

TEHURA

Who is he?

PYRRHA

'Tis all one who he is and what he is.
Whether hell gave him birth, or the same mother
From whom I sprang. 'Tis all one if he murdered
His mother, fell upon his father like
A robber, drove him out to banishment
And into misery, and me with him.
It is all one! What matters it? This is
The work of demons swarming in the abyss,
In the air and in the sky. And were it not,
Did his hand deal the meditated blow,
Stretching his father bleeding on the top
Of other corpses on the weltering road
Of blood that marked his blindly-seeing course,
I would have had to cheer him when I saw him.
Let him curse God, and I curse God. Let him
But signal with his finger, and every crime
He e'er committed I commit forthwith
Without a backward thought. He made of me
An instrument of his lust, piling up incest
Atop of other misdeeds, and I envy
No more the bliss of all the gods in heaven.

ORMANN

[*As before.*

Father, where art thou? Father, father, father!
Give answer to the damned one, to thy son!

TEHURA

Yakka, thou hearest, thou art not upon
The same path that he treads whom thou pursuest,

PYRRHA

O, was that not his voice? Ormann, Ormann!
My father shall not rob me of him, no,
With his magic and insidious magnanimity.

[PYRRHA *springs from the rock and disappears. Cries of "Ormann, Ormann" and "father, father" can be heard answering each other, sometimes nearer, sometimes farther off. Suddenly* ORMANN *appears.*

ORMANN

[*Perceives* TEHURA.

Where is he?

TEHURA

Who?

ORMANN

He whom I seek for: He!

TEHURA

How can I know whom thou dost seek, O stranger?

ORMANN

Not so, thou dusky and maternal maiden,
Whom some God sends me: speak not so to me.
Thou seest, I am distracted, I am crushed.

TEHURA

Stand up. Thou seekest the wonder-maker, seekest

The priest-king and thy father. He who once
Held thee to his breast as his most precious jewel,
Heart beating against heart, and whom thou then
Thyself didst alienate and drive from thee.
Into whose once-spurned presence thou dost press
In the stormy sorrow of an insight which
His wise and guiding hand revealed to thee.

ORMANN

O thou, shut not thine ear. What I have shrieked
To all the brakes and all the rocky walls
And the unheeding slag of this volcano:
Thou darest not be unheeding, thou must hear it.
Ah me, my life was nought but sorrow since
I wrested it from his. My fiery blood
Would suffer neither bit nor bridle, and
In bit and bridle did my father hold me.
I yearned to kneel down at my father's feet,
To weep upon my mother's neck, but they,
Father and mother alike, were long driven out.
O thou, if he still lives, show him to me:
He, who has proved to me now who he is,
May he perceive now also who I am!
Know that not only through the magic net
Of Providence was I brought near to him.
I am near to him, even should I never see him
Again in the body. To his lofty stature
I have been growing up, and if I rage
Against myself, it is not from remorse
So much as from the knowledge that the errors
And yearning ardours of my life are now
On the verge of a fulfilment more than blissful,
And yet that this excess of noble justice
This mighty wonder of reconciliation

Depends upon the falling of a leaf.
He must needs see who I am. That I am
His son, and worthy of him. He must know
That I can see the bleeding sun of his heart
Whose rays are shed on me and purify
And purge me clean of dross with glowing fire.
He must see in me one who was ne'er his foe,
One ripe and ready as himself beside him
Calmly to take the last road into nothingness.

[Prospero *has appeared higher among the rocks. The mantle flutters from his shoulders. In his hand he holds a beggar's bowl out of which a blue flame flickers. He is lit up by the setting sun.*

Prospero

[*Turning to the sun.*

O Titan, Titan thou drawest after thee
For the last time the fiery world of light
In thy creator's soul. The tide of fire
Sweeps roaring over all the peaks, and plunges
A sounding sea into all the deeps. O thou,
Mightiest minister of my magic hall,
Inviolably loyal, as I greet thee,
Thou splendid one, so do I set thee free.
I was indeed a master of magic art,
A sorcerer, but another hand than mine
Invisibly wove with me my sorceries;
And I became its willing instrument.
My hand it was that pulled the shuttle's threads
But the other hand moved ever within mine,
And onwards drove the work of creation that
Is born in death and dies in being born.
Once more in the holy moment of departure,

While the mighty loom still hums and shapes my
work,
Which yet is not my work, I give thee greeting,
Thou frightful-wondrous world of sorcery
And of illusion. Thou dost bear, like flowers
On happy meadows, curses million-fold,
And I have plucked them joyously, and rolled
With glee in dew of sorrow, in scents of death
Among the grasses. And as the web I wove,
Ever increasing, ensnared me ever tighter,
And shapes of manifold form that I had made
Pressed thick upon me, my own sorcery
Throttled me, and my shadow-folk inhumanly
Fell on me, their creator, and racked me sore.
I hit out round me. Battle, ever battle,
As were this world of a madman's bite engendered,
And this giant mill, creation, dripping blood,
That cruel and murderous destroys its fruit.
Nay, nay, it is not true. Nought is illusion,
For blood is blood, and bread is bread, and murder
Is murder. Are all these maws illusion
Which fellow-creatures gape against each other,
And which blind life parades in terrible pomp?
Is not the human body torn in pieces
By the shark's jaw? Is not the tiger's hunger
An agonising hate and lust for blood?
Rends he not living things and gulps their flesh?
Was ever creature born into this world
Without a weapon for offence? And the mother
Who bears her child in throes of fear and dread
Does she not breed both fear and dread in the
child?—
That is not an illusion, nay, 'tis so.
And this were then the illusion, that the world
Was but an illusion of my sorcery:

And this is madness!—Nay! Two eyes are shining
Upon me through the mist. Tehura, thou!
And from the star of love rays thrill me through
Like gentle music of the spheres. Redemption
Is nigh. O priestess, pure of heart, take thou
The world of sense away, bestow on me
That nothingness which is my fitting portion.
I feel thee, I am sinking in thee! Nothingness!

[*Everything vanishes in mist.*

THE WHITE SAVIOUR

A DRAMATIC FANTASY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Montezuma, *Emperor of Mexico.*
Guatemotzin, *his son.*
Cacamatzin, *Mexican prince.*
Qualpopoca, *Mexican prince.*
Marina, *a Mexican girl.*
The High Priest.
First Sacrificial Priest.
Second Sacrificial Priest.
First Scholar.
Second Scholar.
Priest of Quetzalcoatl.
Surgeon.
Three daughters of Montezuma.
Fernando Cortez.
Pedro de Alvarado, *Knight.*
Las Casas.
Gomara, *Cortez's confessor.*
Father Olmedo.
Diego Ordaz.
Christoval de Guzman.
Don Juan Xamarillo.
Jeronimo de Aguilar.
Bernal Diaz.
Gonzalo de Sandoval.
Velasquez de Leon.
Martin Lopez.
First Officer.
Second Officer.

Spanish knights and soldiers, Mexican nobles, warriors, runners, servants, girls, women, and the populace.

FIRST SCENE

A chamber in the smaller temple of Quetzalcoatl in Tenochtitlan. A curtain covered with astronomical signs shuts off the back half of the room. In front of it stands a PRIEST.

MONTEZUMA *appears with a small following, who remain at a slight distance: among these* CACAMATZIN *and* GUATEMOTZIN.

MONTEZUMA

[*He has been slowly and absent-mindedly walking about; but now he remains standing in front of the priest.*

Tell me then about the white god,
Priest! For I would hear the fable
Once again. Thou knowest which.

THE PRIEST

The first founders of thy house,
Mighty lord, omnipotent king,
Long ago subdued this land.
The commander of their legions
Was, like thee, son of the sun.
Thou art of his blood, and godlike;
For the science of our temple
Names him openly the sun-god.
When his children's great dominion
Here invincible he founded,

Then he swung himself to heaven,
Back on cosmos' flaming throne.

Montezuma

What he promised tell me now.

The Priest

Here! The promise which the god
Left behind him to his priesthood
Ran: when once three thousand summers
On the winter's snow have followed,
He will come to earth again,
That his children exiled long
He may take home to his splendour.

Montezuma

And the seers of your priesthood
Who await on year and hour,
They say now . . . ?

The Priest

The time is nigh
Of the god's return, they say,
When the godhead, once again
Helmeted with gold, will come down,
In his eyes the hues of heaven,
On his face a silvery splendour,
His hair, light flowing in golden streams.

Montezuma

I am hideous!

The Priest

Son of the sun,
If the mist of tribulation,
Through this saying, like a cloud,
Makes more dim thy beauty's flash,
Even so it blinds our eyes
So that they are nigh consumed.

Montezuma

Priest, if the almighty godhead
Is white in countenance, golden of hair,
With white limbs and with blue eyes,
Then he loves me not; he hates me!
Or why else should I be cursed with
Night black hair and with dark eyes,
Loathsome, dusky-coloured skin?
How is it you cannot say
Why my people are exiled
In the dream o'erburdened world?
And how have we sinned against him,
The first father of our blood,
That so heavy is his hand?
Ye have merited death; ye have not
Kept the word of God in faith.—
But what say you to the rumour
That a horde of foreign robbers,
White, and murderous as demons,
Have o'erleapt our frontiers?
Couriers confounded stammer
Things incomprehensible.
If one credits them, these carry
Lightning and thunder in their hands,
Ride on horrid beasts of fable

Spitting fire and with great wings;
Slay far off but with a nod.

THE PRIEST

Lord, thou'rt come here not too soon.
From the borders of thy kingdom
Rumours in confusion throng;
It is said that the dread strangers
Overthrew thy ancient foes,
Put in chains the Tlazcalaners;
In their capital lord it now.
Yet immortal they are not.

MONTEZUMA

What we, servants of Mexitli,
Never could do, that they have done.
Sons of the sun they needs must be.
And what's more, they are our friends.

[CACAMATZIN, *twenty years old, a prince in* MONTEZUMA'S *train, throws himself at his feet.*

You would speak, O Cacamatzin.
Speak!

CACAMATZIN

O lord, trust not these devils
Spewed up by the mighty waters!
Give command to all the districts:
They shall summon all their warriors,
Each, even to the hindmost man.
For they come not to us as friends,
These abhorrent, alien devils:
Thou had'st never bitterer foes.

Montezuma

Priest, speak thou again. Thy words are
Pregnant with the fire of heaven,
And they thrill me through and through.
What declares thy gaze to me,
Changing like light? Tell thy secret!
Thou concealest something still.

The Priest

Son of the sun, what in dark riddle,
In dumb hieroglyph is hidden,
And living walks among thy people,
That the Saviour will come down—
Ineffable and awful thought—
This becomes the very truth.
Yet great Quetzalcoatl's servants—
He who comes—these are not deathless.

Montezuma

How dost thou know that?

The Priest

I know it.
King, the wonders which have happened,
Full of dread, must be related:
Clear as day they correspond
To the sayings of tradition.
But a black unwitting sin
Has already been committed
Against Quetzalcoatl's servants.
Heavy with sorrow I proclaim it;
And the truth, perceive it here!

[*The curtain opens and there is seen the*

severed, long-locked head of a Spanish knight, on a golden platter on the altar. The temple servants stand round it.

Montezuma

[*At first not recognising what it is draws near slowly, then trembles and stands still, deeply moved. As if the words were wrenched from his lips.*

It is a son of the sun!

The Priest

Naught else.
Even as the word foretold:
He lacks but immortality.

Montezuma

Who can say that, hasty priest!
Is the godhead not almighty?
And, insulted, would it strike back,
It, the lord of every magic?
Let me look in silence. Peace!—
But where is the blasphemous hand
Which has severed from the godlike
Flesh a head which but to touch
Shuddering reverence forbids me?
Where the man who thinks eternal
Penitence too short for him?
Where? For I will know it! Where?

The Priest

Where the author of this murder
Lingers out his damned life

No one knows. 'Tis said a hunter
Of the Cazik Qualpopoca,
Who is governor in Nautla,
Found in a wood the holy head.
Thus the regent sent the tidings.

Montezuma

Surely Qualpopoca slumbers,
Lies in bed, or in the grave!
For dead servants I've no use.
And how came the head thus far?

The Priest

Lord, thy vassal sent it hither.

Montezuma

How was't brought?

The Priest

A peasant, lord,
Bore it hither in a sack.

Montezuma

[*Turns to his followers.*
Do ye hear? O Guatemotzin,
Even such servants has thy father,
Stupid mindless animals!
O for shame! that not with golden
Warrior courtesy of the Caziks,
Not led forward by kings' hands,
Not amid priests' long processions
And the hollow drum-beats' thunder,

To our temple came it here,
This poor head, to our chief city,—
But insulted and unsightly.
It demands bloody atonement.

Guatemotzin

[*Throws himself at* Montezuma's *feet.*
Pity, lord! None of us here
Sees this head, save thou, with love.
Fear, yea, hate, it wakes in all.
Yea, it breathes forth icy terror.

The Priest

Not to those who are wise: see this.
[*The servants of the temple bring out the Spaniard's helmet, inlaid with gold.*

Montezuma

[*In amazement.*
The helmet of a god! Resplendent!
Guatemotzin, Cacamatzin,
All your fears are clear to me.
Only the god's true children know not
Terror when the gods are nigh.
And they come: who doubts it still?
I can bear no more. My heart
Hammers too wildly with ecstasy.
I am slain with sacred terrors.
[*He clutches at his heart: his attendants hasten to support him.*

SECOND SCENE

A hall in MONTEZUMA'S *palace in Tenochtitlan. Along the walls wait servants. The young princes* CACAMATZIN *and* GUATEMOTZIN *walk backwards and forwards while waiting for the king. It is early morning.*

CACAMATZIN

It is dreadful. Naught will move him.

GUATEMOTZIN

O what madness! Even if these
Lead the lightning and the thunder,
Ride the sun's loud braying dragons,
They are not invulnerable.

CACAMATZIN

No! What clatters down in dust
Under the enemy's hand is mortal!
But corruptible and mortal
The true deities are not.

GUATEMOTZIN

True gods they! Nay, naught but carrion
That white head was, in the temple.
Loathsome hair smeared o'er with blood,

Squinting and defeated glance!
He who bore it on his shoulders
May have come of giant blood,
Yea, a God-man may have been.
Yet he fought and he was slain,
Suffered and died in his own gore,
Knew the death throes, even as we shall.

Cacamatzin

Thou persuade him! Stony numbness
Holds the king's mind fast imprisoned.
Nay, he would not even accept
What thou said'st about the severed
Bloody head there in the temple.
Ye are men, and know but men,
So he says here night and day.
I alone am son of the sun
And a Tonatiuh, and know
The sun's children and their fates!

[*The* Cazik Qualpopoca *enters.*

Qualpopoca

Young high princes, can you tell me:
Has the king yet left his bed?

Guatemotzin

No.

Qualpopoca

Then tell me, ye who hourly
Live within his royal glance
And are witness of each mood
Passing o'er his countenance,

What has moved his majesty,
At this hour, to call me to him?
At the land's frontier, 'tis certain,
I am needed more than here.

Cacamatzin

Lord, we know't

Qualpopoca

Into defenceless
Nautla break the foreign robbers,
Giants who command the lightning.
Yet, be it or sword or lightning,
One can perish only once.
And I might breathe through my warriors
Bravery, till they stand firm,
Like great lions, like great heroes.
But what can I compass here,
Where each instant that I tarry
Pays in cities, land and men?

Guatemotzin

Lord, you saw them? You, yourself?
Saw them living? Saw them truly
Riding on the sun's bright dragons,
Distant slaying with their lightning?
Is it true, what all report?
Or has the degraded rabble
Hatched from fear a brood of ghosts?

Qualpopoca

They are mortal! They are mortal!
Should I lie before I knew it?—
Yet I too was lamed with terror.

Since I've known it, I'm resolved.
O the day when first I proved it,
And the hour, may they be blessed!
Our black panther showed the way.
He brought in one in his mouth,
A white god, a thunderer.
Shuddering the pale priests bound him
To the round block cut in jasper.
Like the moon-god, a bent bow,
Hung the giant motionless.
And we trembled! Long we trembled,
Wondering, dared we wake the drums
And fulfil the sacrifice.
For it seemed to us in truth
That this bent, contorted body
Was cut from the heart of the sun.
With light godlike arms spead wide, he
Waited, as it seemed, a signal
To rise up with the altar block
To the radiant floor of light.
But I signalled, and the servers
Blew the great resounding conches.
The hollow drums of Theocalli,
Sounding, to the god announced
Our audacious sacrifice.
Yet, be't this or that, I shuddered
When the priest, half-hesitating,
Raised on high the sharp, stone dagger.
But a breath in air it hovered!
Then a sound was torn from me;
The white god was flecked with crimson,
And the blood stream black gushed out.
And I drew near, ye young princes,
Drew near till the hot red torrent
Wetted and defiled my raiment,

While with moveless eyes I followed
Every motion of the giant
While one tore his red heart out.
Fixed, dumb-suffering was his gaze
When the smoking, naked beating
Of his heart he saw, and died:
Died as all men die, grew strengthless,
Heavy, with slackened limbs; and died.

Cacamatzin

So. And then the severed head—
That is his?

Qualpopoca

Yea, as thou sayest;
Though I wrote that in the forest
With the helmet, 'twas discovered.

Cacamatzin

But what held thee back from telling
What befell even as it happened?

Qualpopoca

It was prudence lest Mexitli's
Temple drones might take offence:
For such rites by law belong
To the kingdom's capital.

Cacamatzin

Know you, then, that Quetzalcoatl's
Youthful priest, towards whom the war-god's
Bloody priests nurse deadly hatred,
Has got possession of the head—
Be't by trickery or design.

And, adorned with gold and flowers,
It lies as if it were the godhead
On the altar of the sun god.
Thus he showed it to the king
Who, pursued by this slain man,
Is distraught with fabulous dreams.

[Montezuma, *followed by his train, comes in hastily.*

Montezuma

You speak! Of what?

[*Silence.*

Ah, none of you will
Rob the first word from the others.
Such nobility makes me shamed!
I must rise to the occasion:
I absolve you from replying.

[*Apart from his following he walks slowly, sunk in himself. The servants, as well as the princes, have drawn over their rich garb plain unobtrusive cloaks.*

Montezuma

I am lonely. Frost surrounds me.
No one loves me. Serfs and foes,
These, but these, the world has given me.
Bring my daughters!

[*Three beautiful young girls between eleven and fourteen are conducted in. They stand silently before their father, who strokes their hair pensively.*

Know you me?
See, they tremble!—Call me father!
Call me father! or begone!

[*The daughters are led away.*

I am lonely.—I have servants;
But no comrade and no brother,
And no god is with me here.

Qualpopoca

[*Draws near with deep reverence.*

True, the council of thy vassals
In the kingdom dare not claim
To be ranked with gods, or brothers
Of the king's own majesty.
And the voice of friend attains not
Heights where dwells the son of the sun.
But—what reverence forbids not—
Love and loyalty we cherish.

Montezuma

Why do I return forever
From the cave of viewless spirit
Back into the lying light?
Where the impotence of my being
Goads me on through homeless space?
Naught avails me! And the holy
Blood of gods which rolls in me,
When I slumber, when I dream, is
Stagnant lead in candid day.
Help me! Help me, for I suffer!
I'm a beggar, not a king;
And the corpse of my own self.—
In the sun's lap, the sun's heart,
Entered in, ah, home returned,
Blessed, knowing naught, I rest,
In the night in dreamless sleep;
Or I labour—if I dream—

Shaping rapturous like a godhead.
There I spread in blest creation
Transient worlds, and vault the skies;
Sling afar, like ears of corn,
Star-seeds through unmeasured space.
Thus in great and thus in small,
Willing without will, a wanderer,
Over cosmos' shores I peer,
Or I perfect this dull earth
Till it is a paradise.
Streams and valleys issue soundless
From the air into their being;
Islands stand, and I can see them,
And a people who are happy;
Bird, and fish, and worm are there.
Yet what do I prate of! Waking
I am ringed with loathsome things;
Alien to me, strange and senseless.—
Qualpopoca, you are welcome.
What occasion brings you here?

Qualpopoca

Thy command!

Montezuma

Command? Preserve us
From great pride! What! *I* command *you*
Mighty princes! Not I you.
For in you is power and prudence.

Qualpopoca

King, in what have I offended?

Thus one flings words at transgressors
After judgment has been given.

Montezuma

To pass judgment, that is thine.
I am but a fool and childish.

Qualpopoca

Lord, thy words are heavy.

Montezuma

O
Had I power to twist a hair,
Or lived there in all my kingdom
But one man so free from malice
That ten times a single day
He would not sell me in secret!

Qualpopoca

Lord, if it were my own blood,
Were't my son, who but in fancy
Thought what thou hast here declared,
To thy headsmen I would bring him,
Or myself smite off his head.

Montezuma

Thou art eager!

Qualpopoca

More than eager!
For I fear not even death
Half so much as an opinion
Which, like thine, strikes to my heart.

Montezuma

Pride! I know him well. My headsmen
Shall utterly destroy his sons,
As he has destroyed my will.
Thou art false; thou hast betrayed me;
Or, then, was the son of the sun not
Slain in the temple secretly?

Qualpopoca

Yea! 'Twas even so! I lied!

Montezuma

To the death block!

Cacamatzin

Sun-born prince,
Take my life too, also mine!

Montezuma

Poisonous vermin creep around me,
Undermining—cowards, false
And blind—the ground on which I tread.
You are serpents and not columns!
Columns I seek for, and foundations
Of my people; pillars, beams,
To soar, bear-up, endure and hold,
Against time and eternity,
The holy temple of my house.

Guatemotzin

Lord, thou hast said it: we are pillars!
But thou loosenest our foundations

And we sink within the ground!
Yet far rather would I singly
Enter in the night of death,
Than in that which soon will come
If the foreign devil triumphs.

Montezuma

He will triumph! Fall then headlong
In the graves of your own fortunes,
Fools whom error has made blind!
Who am I, and who are you,
That you set my higher, godlike
Wisdom against your shallow folly?
Yes, our kingdom is invaded
By the god, by Quetzalcoatl,
Holy ancestor of my house!
Every fibre of my body,
Joyfully trembling, tells me so.
And you would, like men forsaken,
Like the damned, take arms against him?
He who thundering comes with light
You would snare, yea, murder, slaughter,
Sacrifice like a hunted beast?

Qualpopoca

Lord, even in the hour of death
I would say: thou art mistaken.
The abyss has vomited
That great rabble of white wolves;
And the chief wolf is no god.

Montezuma

Call the priest of Quetzalcoatl.

QUALPOPOCA

Quetzalcoatl? Lord, his priests
Warfare hate and blood avoid.
To them is a beggar godlike.

MONTEZUMA

And the people? Blasphemers!
But the living faith lives only
In the deep hearts of the people.
There live piety and reverence.
As for you, who will gainsay
That you are contemners, doubters,
And deniers of your god?

QUALPOPOCA

I unfaithful? First a traitor,
Then denier of his god:
Sun-born king, even so thou thinkest me?
So mistakest thou thy servant,
Truer to thee than all the rest;
Who the gods' perpetual service
Strict observes, in thee, the king,
Worships the god's inviolate son?
Thou, yea, thou art sure a godhead,
Thy unsullied strength partaking
With the hosts of glittering stars!
Even if clouds drape night around thee,
Thou'rt a god! The other not;
He whose mortal, severed head,
Spreading pest, slow wastes away.

MONTEZUMA

And my folk? Is't hidden from thee
How even now from thousand places

Mighty the rumour rushes on?
How in near and distant fields
Joyful shuddering shakes my people?
How they shout in happy tumult,
The gods are coming! and make ready,
And in pilgrims' lengthening trains
Go towards the rising sun?
To Cholula! To Cholula!
They cry ever to each other,
Each one feels it, each one knows it,
To Cholula came the saviour,
To the temple of the sun.
And the redeemer comes again,
Freeing us from nights of terror,
From the blood-swamp of our being;
Leading us home into his light.
And the radiant upward-soaring
Of all hearts and of all souls,
Of the hungering, of the suffering,
In the open manifesting,
In fulfilment everlasting
Of the word of Quetzalcoatl,
Blinded animals, feel you it not?
To Cholula!

Qualpopoca

Lord and king,
For a little wait in patience!
Soon enough if thou set'st not
Warriors 'twixt that god and thee,
Stout, inconquerable and countless
As the sands upon the sea-shore,
On thy door he will knock himself.

[*The* Priest *of Quetzalcoatl appears.*

Montezuma

Hear! My arms are still wide-reaching,
And my ears hear many things.
Now my vassal has confirmed
What before I would not credit.
Yes, in Huitlipochtli's temple
Died in sooth the Tonatiuh;
Was not slaughtered in the forest.

The Priest

If the war-god's bloody-minded
Priests give up in sacrifice,
Thus, the nursling of the sun,
Then the promise is fulfilled,
Double-thoughted, doubly clear.
For they crucified the flesh,
Not the soul and not the godhead;
These can never pass away.
And our day stands on the stroke
Of their final manifesting.

Qualpopoca

Dream'st thou, boy?

The Priest

No, I have awakened!
But you sleep the sleep of death,
While to you the lord of life,
The kind shepherd full of love,
Messenger of peace, draws near.

Qualpopoca

Weakling! Tell me then what nurse
Spun thee the tale, thou on her knee?

Peacebringers! I say their eyes
Scatter pest, and their breath murder;
And their darkling anger thunders,
And with fiery tongues they eat
All men till the earth is empty.
They are sorcerers—the war-god's
Demons disobedient,
In revolt against his might:
Murderers from eternity.

The Priest

Can you deny then that the foreign
Murderers in peace have come
To the temple in Cholula,
With the sun-born brood behind them,
Used to victory, hosts of light?
And have not the Cholulaners
Joyful given them allegiance?
Do not Quetzalcoatl's priests
Deck the dreadful, winged dragon
With the garland's jocund leaves?
Do the folk not rain down flowers?

Qualpopoca

Yea, Cholula has down-fallen,
Priest. Yet go thou there, and see,
See the mole of human flesh, o'er
Which the saviour marches on.
Fast encamped before the city
Lay this devil, mouthing peace.
Peaceful through the great camp's lanes
Poured Cholula's citizens,
Numberless, a joyful rabble.
Then the camp belched death and horror,

And the white-hued slaughterers fell,
Mad with murder, on the people.
O what butchery, what foul murder;
Felling, stabbing, killing, torturing!
And no mercy knew they all.
This, my lord, this is my errand.
This, and further, to awake him
Who of a sun-born saviour dreams.
Ruler! Lord of all the Toltecs,
Who are children of the god,
And high Huitlipochtli's sons:
Let it not be peace and flowers!
Let the war-god's conches blow!
Put trust in the old, true god!
He alone has power to save us
By his wisdom. Call thy people!
Bid them fight until they drive back
Those white wolves from the abyss.
And upon the day of peace,
The folk will greet your false sun-gods,
Priests, then as it may be fitting:
Not with festoons of soft flowers,—
But with tough thongs they will bind them
In the temple, crucify them
On the sacrificial block.

Montezuma

I am king! And what will happen
Lies alone within my will;
Lies with me and not with thee!

THIRD SCENE

Before the tent of Fernando Cortez *in Cholula, on the high plain of Anahuac. In the distance, the city Cholula, with the mighty pyramids of the temple of the sun. Near the tent flutters* Cortez' *standard, black samite embroidered with gold, with a red cross over blue and white stripes. Sitting, standing, or walking about in marked excitement, the following:* Gomara, Cortez' *father confessor;* Father Olmedo; Pedro de Alvarado; Diego Ordaz; Christoval de Guzman; Don Juan Xamarillo; Jeronimo de Aguilar; Las Casas; Bernal Diaz.

Pedro de Alvarado

[*A knight, twenty-seven years old, with long yellow hair, rose and cream complexion, of extraordinary strength, daring and beauty.*

Spaniards must forever bicker.

Las Casas

And Spaniards must forever murder,
Be it children, women, old folks—
Seeing it's fitting work for Christians.

Pedro de Alvarado

Take the gown, then; minister
To my soul's good, if you will!
One who cannot slay a pigeon
Should not try to be a soldier.

Las Casas

Fight with lions, not with pigeons!
I, at least, content resign
Pigeon slaughter to my cook.

Father Olmedo

Peace, friends, peace! Pray do not wrangle.
We are a small band of Spaniards,
Exiled from our fatherland,
And surrounded by our foes.
Therefore be friends.

Las Casas

Nay, never, father,
Can I agree with Alvarado
Over that foul bath of blood.

Pedro de Alvarado

And I truly not with you.

Las Casas

It's a shame-spot!

Pedro de Alvarado

Shame-spot? Nonsense!

Las Casas

Through an unsuspecting crowd
To run killing like hyenas—
Through a rabble who were come but
To inspect our arms, and wonder:
It was madness, what we did!
Whoever counselled our great leader
Did him but a scurvy service.

Pedro de Alvarado

What the Indian confessed
On the rack—do you gainsay that?

Las Casas

On the rack!

Pedro de Alvarado

That all those warriors,
Yea, and servants, whom they sent us
To conduct us through the land,
Were instructed to one purpose—
To destroy us on the march?

Las Casas

Ghosts of fear, and nothing more.

Pedro de Alvarado

I, and fear! You are mistaken!

Las Casas

It will always be a mystery
That just you, whom all at first

Gazed at with amazed delight, as
'Twere Saint George, the dragon-slayer;
You, who, loaded down with roses
Rode into the town Cholula,—
You it was prepared for them
Fell destruction, gruesome slaughter
Of their fathers, sons and brothers.

Pedro de Alvarado

O, I am no snuffling George!
But to the dragon of betrayal,
By Saint George! I gave the death-blow!
But enough, enough of this!

Gomara

Whether treachery here or not
Loured—no one can tell that now;
But the sentence is accomplished,
And the dead rise not again.

Don Juan Xamarillo

War is war! If our position
Were not what in truth it is,
Desperate, nay, almost hopeless,
And in the country of our foes,
I would say in Christian mood, be
Mild, be merciful, like you.
But being situate as we are,
Suspicion—even if innocence
Innocently suffers for it—
Must be our cry, must be our guide,
Must be our very sword of judgment!

Gomara

Think what hangs upon our project!
We, four hundred Christian souls,
Carry the true cross of our Saviour
Into the night of heathen lands.
If we plant the holy banner
Over these abominations—
O, what matters human blood?
Look around you. In Cholula
Only, are five hundred towers
Where false deities are adored.
What a victory waits us here!
What a prize! And what a loss,
If we should be overthrown!
Yea, we are a sacred army,
And if it serve but for our safety
To shed blood, what matters it?—
Were it streams of heathen blood!
May the streets o'er which we walk
Run and foam with brooks of blood,
If it serve the sacred faith.
If we bring eternal healing
To but one of these poor souls—
If we succour but one soul
From damnation everlasting—
O, what matters human blood?

Las Casas

Who would venture, holy father,
To gainsay your sacred words?
Yet knights of the cross should not
Be more evil than the heathen,
Full of murder and of greed,
Clumsy servants of raw lust,

Doers of those abominations
Which the vicious best can do.

Pedro de Alvarado

Who is he whom you describe?
Name him!

Las Casas

If the bonnet fits—

Pedro de Alvarado

Draw! On guard!

[*He draws his sword.* Cortez *comes out of his tent.*

Cortez

What folly is this?
Can you not tell friend from foe?

Pedro de Alvarado

General, 'tis but now this knight
Trifled with my knightly honour,
Trifled idly, without knowing
That he put his life in peril.
Because we did what we must needs do,
Because we slew—driven by our need—
Some few cannibals who are wont to
Fatten themselves on human flesh,
That we might not stew, ourselves,
After defeat within their pots—
He did call me now, this Spaniard,
Worker of abomination,
Common murderer, servant of lust.

Cortez

[*At whose entrance all have stood up, breaks the silence.*

Comrades, where in all the world
Do you keep what men call reason?
Precious as the word of Christ
Is each ounce of Spanish blood
In our hard and perilous task.
And your bickering is waste:
Let us not look back, but forward!
Hear what I've to say to you!—
Thanks to our Lord and to Saint James,
Thanks to the bounty of our great
Royal lord and emperor,
Charles the Fifth in far Madrid,
We have fought our way thus far
Through a land of enemies.
And the task has not been light.
Spaniards, officers and friends!
First we suffered miseries
Moon after moon upon the sea.
Then how, after our first landing
On the seacoast of West India,
Greater miseries came upon us,
This you know, and know it well.
God was with us. Treachery and
Mutiny within our band
Came to light and was put down!
We established still more firm our
Stubborn hold on foreign earth,
And we founded there the rich
Town and fortress, Vera Cruz.
But where now lies Vera Cruz?
Countless leagues there to the east!

Far behind we left it, swarmed
Deep into the strange land's heart;
Ever fighting, often winning,
Losing, too, among the rest,
Never sure, though always threatened.
Yet, till now we have subdued
All our foes, in spite of this!
And we have it in our power
To subdue a second Spain
For his very Catholic
Majesty, one greater, richer
Almost, than the old one is.
Then, march forward! But, my Spaniards,
Dream not we are at the goal!
For it is my firmset will
To strike forward to the distant
Fabled city, Temixtitlan!
Are you doubtful? Are you afraid?
But before—with half the way gone—
I will weakly close the hazard,
And creep back like a defeated
Captain o'er the Cordilleras'
Two high passes with my men,
I would rather, as I am,
To the greater honour of God,
Mindful of the future glory
Of this new world promised to us,
March upon it by myself!

All

No one wavers! We are with thee!

Cortez

However it may be: this holds,
That my goal and aim stand fast.

And how else, then, could it be?
I have pledged my emperor
My strict word in exact terms, that
I will make this Montezuma
His most meek, obedient vassal,
Or, if that is not to be,
That I'll pack him off to Spain,
Be it living, or a corpse,
Trussed up like a filthy vulture.

All

Keep thy word! We follow thee!

Bernal Diaz

This strange emperor of the Toltecs
Will be no light fowl to truss up.
Every Indian that I spoke to
Trembled but to hear his name.
And Jeronimo, who in this
Is a little more than witness,
Says of the Toltecs, that they are
More than ordinary warlike.

Cortez

Speak, Jeronimo, what know'st thou?

Jeronimo de Aguilar

General, this much stands fast.
The Toltecs are a warlike people.
We must keep our powder dry,
And our hearts more firm than ever.

Bernal Diaz

And what know'st thou of their war-god?

Jeronimo de Aguilar

As before. The people say—
Whether it's true is to be seen—
That they offer all their prisoners
In their temple to the god.

Bernal Diaz

Yes, but how? That's the chief thing!

Jeronimo de Aguilar

There's a block of stone, they say,
Where they bind the prisoner fast,
Then they cut him open, 'tis said—
Yea, in sooth—then tear his heart out:
He's allowed to look at it!—
I and thou, we'll keep ours here.

Diego Ordaz

Faugh, the devils!

Bernal Diaz

How is it
With Francisco de Montejo
Whom they killed? Do they not say
That the scoundrel Qualpopoca
Who's a very loyal savage,
With all secrecy has sent him
To the king in Temixtitlan.
After—on the war-god's altar—
He had suffered that fair ritual
Which Jeronimo has described?

Cortez

Idle fables! Nurses' tales!
Any honest officer
Will not frighten Spanish soldiers
With such spectres and such bugbears.
If it is no fable: better!
God is not afraid of idols!

[*To* Olmedo.

Father, may I ask a service?
Bring the embassy before me;
For the truth is, there are three
Messengers of Montezuma
Who are come here but this minute.
And he who itches to know more
Of the bogey Vitzliputzli
Has his chance to find it out.
My curiosity is not roused.

[*Led by* Marina, *a young, serious, beautiful Indian girl, the dignified ambassadors of* Montezuma *appear;* Cacamatzin, Guatemotzin *and* Qualpopoca. *Behind them a great throng of servants with gifts. The Indians make a profound obeisance, which* Cortez *answers with an inclination of the head.*

Cortez

Speak, Marina!

Marina

My commission
Is to state for these high princes
What grave errand brings them here,

And the wishes which they cherish.
These, Malinche, I have now
To announce unto thee: listen—

Cortez

First announce the princes' names.
Do I err, or is not this one
Qualpopoca, lord in Nautla?

Marina

Yea, Malinche.

Bernal Diaz

[*Growls.*

The damned villain,
Wherefore comes the dog to us?

Cortez

Peace! Who are the other two?

Marina

[*Pointing with her hand.*

This one here, Prince Cacamatzin,
Brother of the omnipotent
Montezuma. This, the exalted
Prince and king's son, Guatemotzin.

Cortez

Very welcome. Now the errand.

Marina

Montezuma greets Malinche,
And he sends him as a pledge

Of his friendship, this rich present
Of unweighed, unreckoned gold.

Gonzalo de Sandoval

[*Who is in the vicinity of the ambassadors.*
It is weighed already, general:
Round about three thousand pesos.

Cortez

So! Speak further.

Marina

Other pledges
Of his friendship he will give;
Will send thee, whither thou desirest,
Even be't to Vera Cruz;
Regular tribute of his gold.
And, though he has great desire to
Gaze upon thy countenance
In the city, Temixtitlan,
He is driven by great concern
For thy good, and for thy people's,
To dissuade thee from the journey.

Cortez

I am grateful!

Marina

Montezuma
Bids thee reckon up even now
What thou mayst desire as tribute,
Be it in gold-dust or in bars,
Or in silver or precious stones,

Or whatever thou mayst wish,
For he has here everything
That can pleasure thy desires.
But thou must not venture farther
Through the country which he rules,
For, though rich in useless treasure,
It is poor in corn and bread.
And the roads are almost trackless—
Some by water overflooded—
And to reach the capital
Thou would'st need a fleet of ships.
The sublime king of the sun,
Who holds dear thy good and safety,
But yet cannot be their surety,
Sends thee thus fraternal warning,
And he begs thee to turn back.

Cortez

Say to these exalted princes
That the courtesy of the sun-king
Touches me to the very heart
We accept the gifts—not gladly;
Yet we know how to requite them.
Let these worthy lords be given
For their toys ours in return;
Pledges fair of our true friendship.

[Cortez' *steward and* Sandoval *hang necklaces of coloured beads round the necks of the ambassadors.*

Bernal Diaz

This stale, often-practised trick

Makes me laugh whene'er I see it:
Three cheap pieces of blown glass
Brings us in three thousand pesos!

Cortez

If we could, as we would wish,
Do the thing they ask, Malinche,
We would turn upon our heels
And go home again at once.
But our high, exalted king,
Lord and emperor, Charles the Fifth,
Whom we serve, has given direction
We must greet in our own person
The exalted Montezuma.
This to do remains our duty.
Therefore let it please the ruler
Of the Toltecs to show grace
To our visit to his city.
To these presents add, Malinche,
That we come that we might give,
Not to rob, not to insult;
That we lead a world redeemer,
Bringer of peace and full of grace,
And no bloody god of war.
Call us pilgrims, who bring merely
Joyous tidings to your lord:
A fair gift, that's so sublime,
None of his can equal it.

[*He dismisses the embassy with a motion of his hand.*

Wait on them as they were kings;
Guard them close like criminals.
After that, well, we shall see!

Qualpopoca

One more word, son of the sun!
Let the king persuade thee yet.
If I speak but badly, pardon!
For your speech is very hard.

Cortez

What! thou speakest in our language!
Splendid! all the better, prince;
For I know now certainly
Thou wilt make an honest Spaniard!
Speak thou first, since thou hast asked
The occasion courteously
Which to violence I'd refuse.
Then I shall make my reply.

Qualpopoca

Mighty lord, heroic warrior,
My unvarnished speech must answer
For my ruler, and for peace,
And for all those questions too,
Which I know thou hast resolved,
And with right, to ask of me.
Our great ruler Montezuma
Urgently begs of you hidalgos
Not to credit all the rumours
Which are spread wide by our foes
Touching him and touching us.
They are lies, and nothing else!
It is false: we do not slaughter
Prisoners before our god, nor
Offer him our wives and children.
You will seek abominations
Such as these in Temixtitlan—

This is certain—all in vain.
These are fables, hatched to stir
Rage and enmity against us.

Cortez

What thou sayest is good to hear;
And believable, certainly.

Qualpopoca

Yet with this there hangs together
Something which I have been blamed for.
While I waited in the king's court
Even now, I was brought tidings—
Hard to credit—that dissension
Between Vera Cruz and Nautla,
Between men in thy command
And my own, had come to pass.
Yea, 'tis even come to war,
And they say, three valiant Spaniards
Are made prisoner, or are slain:
Are no more, at any rate.
Is it true—I will not rest
Till severest punishment
Overtakes those of my people
Who have broken bonds of peace.
And I will not spare my pains
Till I find the missing Spaniards.

Cortez

Take my thanks, Prince Qualpopoca
For thy honest true intention;
But our missing men long since
Without violence have returned
To their homes in Vera Cruz.

Qualpopoca

[*At a loss.*

Is this certain?

Cortez

By Saint James,
Certain as I see thee here.
They are here: would'st speak with them?
Do it, prince! It will repay thee!
And especially there's one, who
Has adventures to relate,
Even to thee, incredible;
Only to be understood by
Men who, like this here, are deathless!

[*He grasps the fairly large ebony cross which* Father Olmedo *carries at his girdle. The crucified thereon is of ivory.* Cortez *holds the crucifix directly before* Qualpopoca's *eyes. The Toltec prince can hardly master his terror.* Cortez *makes a sign; the embassy is led away.*

Cortez

Spaniards, have you noted well
How the ever-blessed body
Of our Saviour has convicted
This barbarian of his murder?
Yea, our gallant comrade was
Offered up without a doubt.
Then, march forward now in earnest
And require his blood with interest!
Let us sweep to Temixtitlan!

FOURTH SCENE

A great square before the temple of the sun-god Quetzalcoatl. By the entrance of the building a group of priests with rose-garlands on their hair and burning torches in their hands. Opposite the temple, right, MONTEZUMA *with* GUATEMOTZIN, CACAMATZIN *and* QUALPOPOCA. *Behind them, according to their rank, a great following of nobles. In the background a street debouches into the place. At the point where it enters stand sentries. The street, which has temples and state buildings on either side, swarms with Aztecs. The rumour of the people's voices is heard.*

MONTEZUMA

Tidings! Tidings! Are the runners
Lame and blind then? Am I served by
Caterpillars, torpid snails?
Up, and speak!

FIRST RUNNER

[*Who has appeared, breathless, and thrown himself at the king's feet. Tells his news kneeling.*
Your majesty!
Even now the son of the sun

Issues out of Culuacan,
And his shoulders are of iron,
And his head is ringed with iron,
White his face and golden his hair;
The god sits upon a white
Monstrous animal of fable.
And a train of sun-gods follow,
Golden their hair and white their faces,
And their flesh forged out of steel.
And they palpitate with beams,
And it seems as if the sun
Nourished them upon his light.
And they laugh, splendid and clear,
Showing rows of snowy teeth,
Lolling proud upon their dragons:
Certain it is that they are deathless.

Montezuma

Hear'st thou that, priest of the sun?

The Priest of Quetzalcoatl

Yea, my lord, I hear and tremble
Rapturous before this marvel.

Qualpopoca

Kill me! Yet I must needs speak,
For this hour decides our fate.
Everything has been prepared.
Give the sign, and we will fasten
All these gods to-morrow morning
To the war-god's offering block.
For if once they reach the dam
'Twixt the river and the city,
And we hold both town and river

Fast surrounded, iron-ringed
With a wall made of thy warriors—
Then we hold them in our hand!

Montezuma

Qualpopoca, this is madness!
What, then, has all thou hast done,
All thy daring, all thy cunning,
Served thee once, but once, against them?
Have strong floods, and walls of rock
Been enough to hold these spirits—
Who have ridden many thousand
Miles across the yawning sea,
Who have flown across huge mountains
Eagle-like, and lightly rested
From their marches and their labours
On the heads of snowy peaks,
To whose everlasting snows
Never Toltec has attained?
Do not mountains quake beneath them
As announcing mighty wizards?
Hast thou not thyself admitted
That they're thunderers, kill afar,
And know even what they see not?
Did they not show thee an image
Of the sacrifice in the temple,
A true image of Tonatiuh?

Qualpopoca

Be it so. They kill afar,
And, for my part, know afar.
They may be strange-knowledged wizards.
Yea, perchance a mere delusion
'Twas we offered in the temple—

Not the white flesh of a giant—
Juggling magic of their art!
All the same, I guard my land,
And my gods' and people's faith;
And I will not serve these gods!

Cacamatzin

Brother, give me leave to go.
I am, too, a king, have duties
To my land and its first city,—
Which I only have resigned
That I might take corporate action
With thee 'gainst these foreign devils.
Now I see it; thou surrenderest—
And that will I never do!
For we Chichimecs will battle,
Battle, yea, to our last man.

Montezuma

My poor brother, thou art blinded!
And thou seest but darkening shadows
Where the mid-day sun shines out.
What is happening every beggar
In the vale of Anahuac
Knows: alone thou knowest it not.
Through the walls that joy breaks in
Which flames up in all my people.
O this time is great, and loudly
I can hear its voice upraised!

Second Runner

[*Rushes in in the same condition as the first, and throws himself at the king's feet.*

Montezuma

Tell thy news!

Second Runner

Your majesty!
Roaring through Mexicalzingo
Comes even now the train of gods!
Peaceful prance their magic dragons,
Neighing loud, tinkling with silver,
Trampling here with firmset feet.
And the golden-locked ones sit
Dreadful in radiance, there on high.
And the clumsy thunder-beasts
Rattle dull behind on wheels,
Quiet and still, as they had never
Spewed from their black mouths death and lightning.
And thy folk in thousand thousands
Skiffs swarm wondering round the dam,
And in tranced silence fling
Garlands and flowers among the gods.
And from all sides of the dam
Shines the gala in the water,
As if double-conflagration
Buried all deep in its mirror.

Montezuma

Now, what say'st thou, Qualpopoca?
And thou, anxious Cacamatzin,
I was once held weak and anxious
But our souls have now changed places.
Be of cheer; remain with me,
And subdue thy fear and hatred.
Greet for me before the city
Our age-long awaited saviour.

GUATEMOTZIN

Father, what strange, terrible
Error lords it in thy breast?
These magicians with their poison
Have destroyed thee from afar.
Send me forth from here, my father.
Give command to every temple
To awake the surly drums
Summoning the folk to battle.
There's time still—but not for long.
'Tis an easy thing to drive them,
Even yet, into the river,
Drown them deep down in the water,
Bury them beneath great pillars,
Cover them up with countless stones.

MONTEZUMA

If man's fruits are as his thoughts
Wilt thou, branch grown from my seed,
Thou too, see the day of harvest!
Search the vaults and bring me here
Great Axayacatl's treasures—
For I, too, was once obedient
To my sire, in holy reverence—
Bring me, too, my royal jewels,
Fashioned skilfully in gold-work,
And my hugest precious stones.
We would lay them at the feet
Of our guest, the son of the sun.

THIRD RUNNER

[*In the same fashion as the first and second.*

Montezuma

Tell thy news!

Third Runner

Your majesty!
Never yet saw Tenochtitlan
A rejoicing such as this.
For the sun-god's snowy children
Come among us glittering;
In the vanguard are the slaves
Whom, commanded by your highness,
Your great princely embassy
Yielded up—innumerable
Carriers with the load of gifts
Given by your majesty.

[*Loud shouts of jubilation are heard from the people.*

Montezuma

Does the world reel? Giddiness
Grips me at the noise! Support me!

[Qualpopoca *and* Cacamatzin *go to him, and he supports himself on their arms. He remains in this position to the end of the scene. At the entry to the square appears now the procession of Spaniards. In front* Cortez *and his officers, who have dismounted. The entry of the Spaniards with the banner of the cross is very imposing. All are richly adorned with flowers.* Cortez *himself carries a garland of red roses around his neck.*

Cortez

[*Remains standing, and in doing so brings the whole procession to a stand-still. Only the advance part of it is visible.*
Which of them here is the king?

Pedro de Alvarado

Surely not the one they bear up
There, like an unhealthy raven?

Cortez

If they will it, we are here
In the loveliest of traps.

Pedro de Alvarado

All our muskets are well loaded.
Every man is fully armed.
If they press us hard—a Spaniard
Equals a thousand savages.

Cortez

Do you call these people savage?
Such magnificence! Such riches!

Pedro de Alvarado

By Saint Peter!—I'm called Peter
Too, and Peter is my patron.
And, upon my life, I savour
Here a hint of Peter's fish-haul.

Cortez

No raillery! Look, he has motioned.
Truly it seems the sickly raven

Is the king, when all is said!
Patience, we can wait a little.

Montezuma

[*Always with his gaze, as if hypnotised, directed towards* Cortez

Feet, be steadfast! Eyes, hold out!
For as true as I myself am
Born of the gods, this one is deathless!
Sacrificed upon the block
But now, inviolate he walks
Here with us, invulnerable.

Guatemotzin

[*Half-loud to* Cacamatzin

Cross bow good, and trusty arrow—
I would show the opposite.

Gonzalo de Sandoval

If there is not gold to weigh
Here—I swear it by Saint James—
'Tis the scales they lack, not gold.

Montezuma

[*Has managed to make a few steps, always supported, towards* Cortez. *At a slight distance his people follow him. He performs the ceremony of greeting, touching the earth with his hand, then kissing it.* Cortez *responds with a military salute.*

Stranger! And since my first childhood
My best friend, be welcome here!
If I were not sick and gloomy,

Peevish slave of unsound flesh,
I had made a day's excursion,
Led thee with me to my city.
But now that at last I see thee
I am weighed down with the guilt
Of my gross, earth-bound existence.
True, I saw thy snowy head
Constantly before my spirit.
In the clear pools of my gardens,
In my bright and silvery mirrors,
Every night I saw it in dream.
Yea, and when I woke I saw it
Smiling in the glorious sun.
But, not firm enough in faith,
Doubts weighed heavy on me still.
I repent of these, accuse them!
Even the magic of thy severed
Fair head full of blood and wounds,
Even thy helmet in my hands
Lifted not the final doubt.
Lord, forgive me. Doubt and faith
Scatter now alike before me;
For now knowledge is fulfilled.
The sin-curse of thousand years
Has not brought me down so low
That I cannot recognise
The brother of my blood eternal.
No! That thou did'st live I knew,
Even if where, I did not know.
Brother, there burst from my breast
Torrents which may gush but once
Up from the everlasting water.
I must cease, or love and terror,
Pain and ecstasy will kill me.
From the darkling curse of time,

From the waste of banishment,
From the mists of the alien void
To return, that is not easy!
For the son of exiled fathers,
Who is ignorant of their guilt,
And knows not why he suffers pain,
Suffers greater wrong than they did.
Brother, this cold world of strangers
Is o'ergrown with sin and guilt.
In the shadow of damnation
Rise hills of abominations.
If thou had'st not come, ah soon
Would the last thin drop of holy
Blood in me have turned unclean!

Qualpopoca

Lord, permit that I make clear
Our king's gracious speech to thee.
He is strict, yet hospitable.
His high majesty allows
Three days for your resting here,
And there shall be nothing lacking
To your people in that time.
This is free, with the condition
That your men will keep the peace
And respect our ancient laws.
We will punish crime with death.

Cortez

It is well. We are content.
But the fair speech of thy king
Thou misunderstandest, prince!
He and I have more in common,
Credit me, than he and thou.

MONTEZUMA

[*To* QUALPOPOCA.

Speak! What does he say?

QUALPOPOCA

Bare falsehood!
All your majesty's kind greeting—
Though he speaks no word of Toltec—
He has guessed at word for word.
His reply swells with presumption.

MARINA

[*At a nod from* CORTEZ, *after the foregoing greeting.*

Lord sublime, omnipotent!
I am this son of the sun's
Soul! And at a sign from him
It stands here to do thy bidding.
The Castilian is not easy,
For it is the speech of gods.
And the Cazik Qualpopoca
Grasps that in it which is human,
But what's more than human, not.

QUALPOPOCA

Silence, filthy damned whore!

MARINA

[*unmoved.*

All too high thou standest, ruler,
All too high he, too, whose soul
Speaks to thee here, for us others

To have hardihood to think
That we could come 'twixt you two.
We are nought, and you are all.
We are strangers, you are brothers.
And the brother greets the brother
With deep joy and with great love.

Montezuma

Like sweet music are thy words,
Thou, the sweet soul of my guest.
But yet tell me, maiden, who art
But a child of my own people,
How thou hast attained this favour,
Yea, this priceless destiny?

Qualpopoca

Lord, this woman is a viper,
Double-tongued, with poisonous fangs,
To be crushed beneath men's heels.
Lost past hope, degenerate,
She hates us, yea, even her mother,
And betrays her land and people.

Montezuma

Silence, lost and blinded one!
And thou, speak again, my child.

Marina

Not with truth and not in wisdom
Has the high prince spoken of me.
For my father in Tabasco
Died, a prince as good as this,
I was left behind, a child.

Nay, I did not hate my mother,
But my mother hated me.
She it was who sold my flesh,
Drove me out in foreign wastes.
Happy now am I returned;
And I bring back to my people
Not the evil spirit of rage;
But I bring joy and salvation,
And the sun-redeemer's grace
To my suffering fatherland.

FIFTH SCENE

In the Spaniards' quarters in Temixtitlan. A spacious room. The entry is guarded by Spanish soldiers. CORTEZ *has stored here all his effects. One sees weapons, saddles, articles of clothing, carpets, stuffs, feathers, ornaments in gold and silver; in short, booty of every description.* CORTEZ *sits at a low table and writes.* MARINA *busies herself, cleaning and putting in order, in the midst of a picturesque confusion.*

CORTEZ

'Tis incredible! Colossal!
Am I then a child who listens
To fairy tales from his old nurse
Who sits babbling on his bed,
So that all around at last
What he's told he sees and hears?

MARINA

Did you call, Malinche?

CORTEZ

Truly!
Come! Come here and waken me!
From Castile I voyaged out

By the way of Genoa—
That may be quite true, indeed!
But if after that I landed
Really in West India,
Or was lost upon the high-seas,
Sunk down to the seas' foundations,
And thence shot up to the moon?
All this seems most possible.

MARINA

Where thou didst find me, that I know.
Whence thou cam'st, love, I know not.

CORTEZ

Be't. This is the moon, and thou
Luna, my dark, shadowy goddess!
Since in a breathspace I have died,
And from here down to the earth
Nevermore a ship can bear me,
Dutifully I take this planet
In possession for his highness,
The sublime, omnipotent,
Very Catholic lord and monarch
Who has given me fullest powers:
Charles the Fifth in far Madrid.
So I let my faithful pen
Write the tidings on this paper,
Which, if there's no other post,
I'll fling to the universe!

MARINA

Marvellous are these thy words.
Thou hast gone unscathed through death!
And through it cam'st thou to us?

Cortez

Thou but dreamest. In Castile
Night held dreams within her lap,
But reality was shouted
Every day by morning light.
In Castile each night was bounteous.
All my dreams were rich with joy,
Rich in naked fair princesses,
Rich in gold and rich in silver,
Rich in pearls and precious stones.
O those ardent Spanish nights
Lay in mystery, all untravelled,
Like a land of fairy tale!
But the days came down like robbers,
And took all my gold away.—
What is dreaming here, Marina?
Nothing here is dream, no, nothing!
For to dream: here that is Spain.
And to wake—that is the moon!
So I write now to the king:
Cortez leaves the world forever;
Cortez now is in a second
Alien wonder-world to seek;
Yea, another, new creation.
And here henceforth is poor Cortez
A world-ruler, yea, a god;
Sinks in joys and swims in pleasures;
Eats larks' wings in idleness.
And the great son of the sun-god,
Who throws all a new world at him,
Calls him brother, lovingly
Calls him the awaited, best-loved!
And a stream of gold and silver
Overflows this Cortez' coffers,

And new coffers still come in,
Still new ones! And now already
Are the newest overfull.
Cortez sleeps at night with Luna,
Sleeps beside the loveliest houris,
And seduces the king's daughter!
Heavens, what a letter, this!
Nay, the good king's majesty
Does not need to be informed—
We are all caught in this fever—
Of poor Cortez' fever-sickness,
Of his sinful seventy-times-seven.
These are things for my confessor.
Sweeter to his majesty
Will be his fair fifth of the booty.
What a hubbub there will be
When the first gold-ship runs in!
Gold! There is the true and Spanish
Saint! Gold, gold, gold! By Saint James
That is truly the one theme
All approve, and gold and gold—
Here there's no inquisitor—
Gives you grace with God and king.

[Pedro de Alvarado *enters.*

Pedro de Alvarado

General, if you take five paces
In this town, you must do something—
Knock your head against a wall—
To persuade yourself you're waking.
Venice over again! Three hundred
Temples mirrored in the water!
Spacious streets and wide canals
Interweaving far away,

And the bridges can't be numbered.
I walked just now in the square—
General, it's incredible—
By itself the place could hold
Salamanca two times over!
Through arcades you walk along
Pleasantly, round all the square,
Mighty pillars at each side,
And all firm in massive stone.
And I reckon sixty thousand
Human beings, buyers, sellers,
Traffic in that giant mart.
You could never count the wares
And the treasures stocked up there.
Everything to wish, in fruits,
Bread and flesh and fish and game;
Goldsmith's wares, silver and gold,
Every kind of precious stone;
Diamonds big as pigeons' eggs,
Each one worth, in confidence,
Some few hundred thousand pesos.
Then there's mussels, tinplate, brass,
Feathers, bone, delicious lobsters,
Chalk, hewn stone, baked bricks and tiles,
Wood for building, stuffed birds, cherries,
Wax and honey from the hive.
Briefly, these dark-hued Venetian
Savages in this distant place
Who, since God first shaped the world,
Have existed without guessing
That white men also existed—
These in all their laws and customs,
In all sciences and arts,
(Which they never learned from us)
Are as civilised as we are.

Cortez

[*writing.*

Note: two times all Salamanca.
In two words, a new creation,
Or a Venice in the moon!

Pedro de Alvarado

General, they conducted me
To their special factories
Where, in great streets set apart,
All their various trades are followed.
And I saw there gardeners, furriers,
Potters, bakers, cotton-weavers,
And—believe my word or not—
There I had my hair shampooed
Just as if it were Seville;
And the barber knew his business.

Cortez

[*writing.*

Barbers good as in Seville.

Pedro de Alvarado

But the barber was a trifle:
Carriers, too, and even beggars,
And for whores, well, words can't say it!—
And this moment, by Saint James,
I come from the eating-house.

Cortez

Since thou'rt eager, I'll be cool.
Thou wast cool when I was eager.
Without doubt we're here at last

In the long-sought wonderland.
But, what brings thee here?

Pedro de Alvarado

A counsel,
If I have thy leave, of prudence.

Cortez

Who brings that has ever my ear.

Pedro de Alvarado

Thanks! The quarter where we lie
Is well guarded at all points,
And at need we could defend it
If the whole town fell upon us.
But there is one small thing which
Could destroy us without hope . . .

Cortez

That would be?

Pedro de Alvarado

To cut us off
Where we are, and starve us out,
They need only break the bridges.

Cortez

Then learn something, gallant Pedro.
After landing first I buried
All my brigantines deep down,
That whoever did not honour
Banner and king, must follow still.

But my cordage, nails and iron
I brought o'er these many hundred
Leagues here to this very town.
'Twas not easy, as thou knowest,
And thou had'st best right to grumble,
For I picked thee out to guard
And transport the lumber here.
But now it's a priceless boon.
For now Martin Lopez can
Make the ships and beach them safe:
There is urgent need of them.

[*Enter* FATHER OLMEDO, LAS CASAS, BERNAL DIAZ *and others.*

CORTEZ

Comrades, you are welcome here.
What's the latest in the moon?

[*All laugh heartily.*

Let me hear you first, Las Casas.
What is happening with these noble,
These imperial savages,
Whom so patiently you study,
Which is of import to me?

LAS CASAS

General, of the many marvels
Into which our daring banner,
Ever moving on, has led us,
Montezuma, this great ruler,
Is to me most marvellous.
Never, nay, not even in Europe,
Have I seen a man like this:
One who walking on the earth,
Truly is exiled and lonely.

Cortez

Truly thou'rt a poet, Las Casas.

Las Casas

Well, the name is honourable!
But this emperor Montezuma
Walks not in our common ways.
Other spheres make music for him.
Other airs respire around him.
He hears voices and sees shapes
Which are not, sire, of this earth.

Cortez

Now, it seems the same to me,
And, I swear, I am in the moon!

Las Casas

Yea, to me, too, he's a moon-prince,
And his soul seems to be woven
All of silvery, frozen moonlight
As if wandering in the night, in
Leading strings of pallid moonbeams,
He dreams though the sunny world.
Laugh, yea, laugh, most worthy Spaniards!
Your derision moves me not.
Speak thou, father. Thou, too, knowest.

Father Olmedo

Truly this son of the sun
Seems much more child of the moon.
Though the sun so hotly flames
All around him, he is frozen.

And he seems, trapped in some magic,
To suck light from vampire stars.
Like a dream-molested sleeper
Trying to escape, to wake,
He wanders helpless in their thralldom.

Cortez

How did he receive the happy
Tidings of eternal joy
Through the grace of Jesus Christ?
And what thought he of the ever
Blessed Mary, Queen of Heaven,
Virgin blest above the blessed?

Father Olmedo

Hard to fathom. Truly strange!
When I spoke to him of Jesus
Christ, and of the Mother of God,
He behaved as if I spoke but
Of your mother and of you.

Cortez

The bare thought is blasphemy.
If you could but make him know
Of our Saviour's death on cross . . .

Father Olmedo

Then he tells me—O he knows
All this by himself already.

Cortez

What, then, does he know?

Father Olmedo

As thus,
Which but by the greatest pains,
Through dim signs and obscure words
I was able to win from him:
Seems you are yourself the Saviour,
You are, and I too, a Christ, who
Somewhere on the Cross was slain,
After that rose up again.
All this happened for his sake,
In the strict sense of an ancient
Saying of his house, and written
In traditions which are sacred.

Cortez

I have heard of it. Marina,
What know'st thou of all these things?

Marina

[*Comes forward, serious, but with a fanatical fire in her eyes.*
I know all!

Cortez

What?—Then declare it.

Marina

Yea, I know! Thou art our Saviour!

Cortez

But how know'st thou?

Marina

It is promised.

Cortez

We would know what 'tis that's promised.

Marina

I am daughter of a Cazik
Of Tabasco, as thou knowest.
And my father, a true Toltec,
Was to Quetzalcoatl's service
In Cholula dedicated.
This god is the one true god,
So he said, not Huitlipochtli.
Huitlipochtli is a kobold,
And the true god's enemy.
But this kobold Huitlipochtli
Bit by bit subdued the land,
Hemming in and cutting off
The god of the sun, the mighty god
Whence our king derives his blood.
But the true remains the true,
And the mighty is still mighty;
And we, last of all his children,
We hold fast still to our faith;
Joyously await the promise.

Cortez

It is good. But clear and round,
Tell us what this promise is
Which you wait in holy fear.

Marina

Lord, thou jestest, for thou art,
Yea, thyself the promised one,
Art thyself the sun god's son,
Are none else than Quetzalcoatl,
Who is come to lead his people
Out of torment and affliction,
From need's manifold oppression,
In fair triumph to their home
In his kingdom in the skies.

Father Olmedo

Myths like these are very curious.

All

Curious, curious, these old myths!

Father Olmedo

Mark: this heathen, this poor savage
Waits the coming of his saviour:
Well—in sooth, do we not bring him?
Some one shows him a dead Spaniard's
Head, in the temple of the sun—
Straight his apprehending spirit
Sees in it the Son of God.
Was it not a symbol then
Of our Lord with crown of thorns?
Speak but of the resurrection
And he sees Fernando Cortez:
But—Fernando Cortez brings
To these folk the risen Jesus.
The mistake is not so great!

Las Casas

Lord, his majesty is here.

Cortez

Heigh, the good man comes here often!

Montezuma

[*With exalted step, his bearing of a still serenity, an inner peace.*

The indifference of a host
Is oft-times less hard to bear
Than an over-jealous kindness.
And thou mayst, beloved brother,
On that score with right accuse me.
Do not strain thy kindness too far.
Thou must close thy doors against me
If I am too troublesome.

Cortez

Lord, thou'rt welcome still to me,
And thou honour'st us past measure
Always, when thou comest to us.

Montezuma

Say not honour. 'Tis love drives me,
And I seek return of love.
When I do not see thee, thou
Long-desired of my soul,
Sinks my spirit back in night—
Not as it does in deepest slumber,
Freeing me from all existence—
But a prey to waking cares.

Are you well contented here?
Tell me: is there still aught lacking?

Cortez

God forbid we should complain.
We have proved thy grace is kingly,
Princely friend, nay, without bound.

Montezuma

Nay you shame me. Wilt thou never
Know in sooth, my dearest brother,
That my lands, my house, the treasures
In my halls, are no more mine?
Thy rejection and disdain
Truly wound me to the heart.

Cortez

Brother, truly with injustice
Does thou call me slow in taking.
We're already so beholden,
So completely naught but debtors,
When we reckon up our treasure
We're too dazed to see it clearly.

Bernal Diaz

[*Aside.*

Good as any fox, my general!

Montezuma

Is it true that you love gold?
Many of my people say it.
Nay, they say still more. They say, it

Works on you with mighty power.
Is this true? Tell me about it.

[*The Spaniards laugh heartily, but try to keep as good a countenance as possible.* Montezuma *speaks on, with a look of slight perplexity.*

Here we're flatly ignorant.
Even a bird with mighty wings
Able in unswerving flight
To the sun to rise in glory—
Prisoned in a lightless cellar
Is blind, exiled from sun and space.

Cortez

Love you not gold? How can that be?

Montezuma

O my brother, can'st thou ask me?
Truly, yea, we love the sacred
Gold out of the suffering star.
But an adverse fate, the deep
Curse of a forgotten time,
Makes our eyes look at it coldly,
Not with burning, as yours do.

Father Olmedo

[*Aside to* Las Casas.

Curse of a forgotten time?
Suffering star? What means all this?

Montezuma

But I use too many words,
For we both, we, thou and I,

Have one soul and share one knowledge
And the tears of our ancestor
Quetzalcoatl we remember.

[*He strips off a gold spiral wound in three rings round his arm, and shows it to the Spaniards.*

To you others, enough to see
Here the seal of consecration,
Knowledge's mysterious, golden
Viper, and my purest fame.
Holy, pure is gold, ye Spaniards.
All the consecrated know it.
You shall see the sacred golden
Treasures of Axayacatl,
My great father born of God.

CORTEZ

Yea, show us the treasure, brother.

MONTEZUMA

[*While he places the golden spiral on* CORTEZ' *arm.*

Son of the sun, accept first this:
Worthier is thine arm than mine.
Symbol pure of all creation,
As we know, is sacred gold.
And so bade my holy father
All the artists of his land—
To the greater honour of God,
Who in halo of beams shines out—
To portray in golden metal,
Patient and laborious,
Grass and flower, tree and spray,
Fish and bird and man and beast.

Yea, the god himself you see
There among his golden creatures,
And he weeps tears of pure gold.

Christoval de Guzman

[*Half aloud.*

My good crucible is in order,
And methinks 'twill not displease me,
With God's help, to melt this image
Of the devil down to gold.

[*With a sign* Montezuma *dismisses his assembled followers. After that* Cortez *dismisses his also.*

Montezuma

Now, great prince, none can disturb us!

Cortez

So it is as it should be
When great rulers speak together.

Montezuma

Nay, not kings, Malinche, gods!

Cortez

In a certain sense, 'tis true:
Yet I am of flesh and blood.

Montezuma

[*Confidingly.*

Lay thy hands on me, Malinche!
For to say thy name, Malinche,

Is my right, as 'tis thy soul's.
Tell me, brother, where is she?

Cortez

[*Calls laughingly.*
Come, Marina! Come, my soul!
[Marina *enters, and stands as awaiting command.*
But I have a better one,
Brother, and it is immortal.

Montezuma

[*With a hint of shy superstition.*
O, I know it. For our souls,
Thine and mine, they are not mortal;
Yea they breathe ever in the pure
And untroubled heavenly world.
Since thou'rt come at last, the promised,
To lead me, the exile, home,
The floods sink which buried me,
And already I can feel
Head and shoulders lifted into
Heaven's calm eternal peace.
All my grief is washed away,
And the clouds which chilled my heart
Are no more, and that sweet sadness
Which made softer night and frost
Is transfigured in pure joy.

Cortez

Truly to hear it gives me joy.
Seldom has the happy message
Which—mankind's most marvellous

Treasure—we bring here with us,
Been so honoured ere 'twas heard.

Montezuma

[*Has trustingly linked arms with* Cortez *and walks with him backwards and forwards.*

Speak, Malinche! Speak, Malinche!
I am not accustomed to wait.
Tell me fully all the message:
Thou hast hidden half from me.
Restlessly I toss at night,
Tortured by anticipation,
Weeping, waiting for deliverance,—
But deliverance is thy secret,
Ever thine, son of the sun.
When will come the fiery charic
Bearing us into the heavens?

Cortez

Soon it comes! But patience, king.
First must thy long-suffering
Folk fulfil the destined law.
Sighing under heavy yokes,
Bleeding under priestly madness,
They have promise of redemption.
And at last they'll come to know
That which has been said, "My yoke
Is easy, and my burden light."

Montezuma

Thou unloadest a great sorrow
From my soul, for it would be

Heavy pain had I to leave
All those little ones behind me
In the Tophet of this world,
And beneath eternal curse.
Often have I trembled, wondering
If it would be granted me
To scatter free the light of life
To my people, to these also.

Cortez

Yea, dear friend. For these in chief
Was the coming of the Messiah.

Montezuma

Yea, I feel it: I am Messiah.
Yet first did thy body of light
Make me know that I am he,
Fill me with power and with love.
For till now I've known but weary
Martyrs of an impotent knowledge.—
But thou wilt not leave me now,
For alone, friend, I am nothing.

Cortez

Should I leave thee at this instant
Jesus Christ would still be with thee,
And the light of the Holy Ghost.

Montezuma

And thyself?

Cortez

In truth, I also.

Montezuma

And thou wilt partake with me
Kingly power among the Toltecs?
Guide the lightnings of my justice,
And the blessing of my love?

Cortez

Yea, that will I.

Montezuma

Now, so help us
Thou, our father Quetzalcoatl!
And in pledge I kiss our soul,
All incarnate in this virgin.

[*He kisses* Marina *on the brow.*

SIXTH SCENE

A hall in the temple of the war-god Huitlipochtli. In the background the great sacrificial block, altars, images of the god. On cushions laid on the stone floor sit the high priest, the first and second priests of the sacrifice, QUALPOPOCA, GUATEMOTZIN *and* CACAMATZIN, *a scholar, and some men of rank. They are ranged in a circle. Night. The hall is lit by torches.*

THE HIGH PRIEST

Since so many friends have pleaded,
I have let myself be present
Here, to weigh in quietness
What our fatherland requires,
With the first heir of our throne,
And the brother of our king,
And chief princes of the land.
Therefore speak, Prince Qualpopoca.

QUALPOPOCA

Holy father, if I bade you
To take part in this our council
'Twas because I was myself
Without light and without leading.
So that I sit here far less
To give counsel than to hear it;

And I beg you, you the wisest
Of our people, to instruct me.
Did I do a wrong when I
Set myself against the strangers
Who are now guests of our king,
Counsellors and friends and brothers?
Did I wrong when I delivered
One of them to die on the block?
Am I wrong now, if I hate them,
Turn away from them, despise them,
To the last hour of my life?

The High Priest

[*After a somewhat long silence.*

Willingly I'd ratify
What you've done, which at its source
Was most noble, with a plain "No."
But the time gives deeper questions,
And we've still to seek an answer.

Cacamatzin

All this seems to be condensed,
To my mind, in one clear question:
Who and what are these strange men?
Are they gods or are they not?
But you're silent. Do you doubt?

The High Priest

Yea, we are doubtful: it is true!

Qualpopoca

Holy father, thy opinion
Has most marvellously altered!
Thy assembled priests in Nautla,

Where we sacrificed the stranger
Lately, acted on thy word.

The High Priest

Wrong, prince: Nautla lies too far.
I first knew it after the deed.
But this much I acknowledge freely:
Never trusted I the coming
Of real children of the sun.

Qualpopoca

Yea, but now that thou hast seen them,
Thou believ'st.

The High Priest

No, but I question!
Question, yea, I say't again,
And in that I say not little!
As for the high priests in the holy
Sun-god's temple in Cholula,
As you know, these doubt no more.

[*He makes a sign, and the* First Sacrificial Priest *begins.*

The First Sacrificial Priest

There's but one true god; in heaven
And on earth there is but one.
Quetzalcoatl in Cholula
Is but part of Huitlipochtli,
But a part of the all creator
Whom we serve, we who are here.
Therefore spreads and shines our knowledge
Wider, deeper in the godhead
Than that of Cholula's priests.

None the less our God is God.
And the part is like the whole.
Therefore we are not the foes
Of the priests of Quetzalcoatl:
But—their mind's thought must be tested.

Qualpopoca

Test it then to the foundation:
For the lie they fatten up—
This will cost our fatherland
Nothing less than ruin, downfall.

The First Sacrificial Priest

O we know well that a youthful
Sun-priest in the capital
Has the ear of our great ruler!
Still, he showed the king, 'tis said,
The true head of Tonatiuh
In the temple of his god.

Qualpopoca

'Twas not Tonatiuh. 'Twas nothing
But a mortal's severed head.
Sons of the sun I do not slay.

The First Sacrificial Priest

All these things must be made plain.
He must meet his punishment,
This young priest, if he has sinned
'Gainst the everlasting truth.
For he's opened wide the door
Of the temple to the idols,
To the gods of this strange people.

The High Priest

Whether they are idols—that is
Doubtful: therefore say not so.
[*He makes a sign. The* Second Sacrificial Priest *begins.*

The Second Sacrificial Priest

It is true that signs and wonders
Manifold declared themselves
On the coming of these giants.
Comets red, with tails of fire,
Shuddered fear through all the land.
And the word which in the temple
Is preserved in knotted strings
And in pictures, this gainsays
Not the landing of these white men.
Yea, all this is true; regarded
Well the wisdom of our temple
Is more favourable to them
Even than that held in Cholula,—
As you now shall see yourselves.
[*He makes a sign. The* First Scholar *takes up the word.*

The First Scholar

Our great fathers, our first fathers,
Our great stem of blossoming godhead,
Dwelt once in the land of Atzlan.
There, surrounded by great waters,
Shone the peak, Cul-hua-can.
Streams of milk and golden honey
Flowed through every verdant valley;
Every hill gave heavy fruit.

And 'twixt hanging fruits and leaves
There was heard the bird of God,
Which is called Ti-hui-tochan.

Guatemotzin

Oh, how sweet the memory
Of our glorious ancestry!

The First Scholar

Yea, thou say'st it: sweet, and great!
For the Toltec, born of light,
Bears a monstrous destiny.
All believe what I declare,
If not all, at least, the many:
Yet what we know is but little.
We stand at all knowing's frontiers,
And we gaze with pious eyes,
As 'twere from a little islet,
Deep into the first sea's night.
That is more than knowledge, brothers
For now faces rise before us,
Images fearful and sublime,—
Rise out of our very self.
And the ancient peak of knowledge
Seems to open out in silence,
And from its abyss of fire
It spouts o'er us the sacred flames.

The High Priest

True, thou wise one; but we would not
Lose ourselves in these great deeps.

What befel our first ancestors?
Why to-day do we not live
Still in peace in that fair land?

The First Scholar

Happened thus: the innocent
Children of Atzlan lived in peace,
And our God smiled on their lives.
And the streams were rich in fish,
Rich in geese, in water-fowl,
And the soil touched by no plough
Gave, rich-measured, maize and pepper,
Bean and vetch and tree and herb.
But upon a day the priest
Huitzi-ton, who knew bird language,
Heard the words Ti-hui-tochan
Ever whispered: "Let us go!"
Ever sang the little bird,
Anxiously, "tihui! tihui!"
And the chosen priest, the holy,
Saw then that almighty love
'Twas that moved the tiny bird-tongue
To conceal from men in gentle
Twitterings the voice of thunder:
"Fly ye from the wrath to come!"
Terrible the wrath of God!
Yet he is faithful still in love,
And he loves us, us, the Toltecs!

The High Priest

But how much he loves us, and
Why he loves us, tell us now.

The First Scholar

Our first mother, full of sorrows,
She who is called Cihua-coatl,
Who, pregnant from the loins of God,
Here below first bore our race,
She was loved by God, the Lord.
And his love flowed onward sweetly
Through the meads of Paradise,
Like a stream full of sweet wine,
O'er her lovely sons and daughters.
But at last the bitter hour came!
From the soft maternal sin
Of our serpent-mother came the
Irremediable ill.
For she said to all her sons:
"Each of ye shall be a god!
Come and eat of your great father's
Sacred apples, drink his blood."
And the serpents, who in secret
Guard God's sacred wisdom, whispered:
"Children, hearken ye to her!"
Then came God and spoke: "What dost thou?"
And she said: "My Lord and God,
When thou knewest me, thy mate,
What begattest thou but gods,
Lord, who are in thine own likeness?"
Then was God displeased. . . .
Enough
Now of this. We turn again
To the bird Ti-hui-tochan.
'Twixt himself and his great wrath
God set pitying the bird's song.
But the young priest, Huitzi-ton,
Was not blinded, and he knew his

Father's voice. And he revealed it
To Tek-Patzin, to his brother.
And they built and guarded jointly
That great ship which in the temple
Still in image is preserved.
And they went into the Ark,
Men and women, grey-beards, children.
Bread and fruit they took with them,
Seeds in every kind, all kind
Of all beasts that breathe and live.
And they set out o'er the waters
From the lovely mount of plenty.
And now came the mighty flood,
And destruction on the world.

Guatemotzin

How came it to pass?

The First Scholar

The sea rose
Roaring over all the islands.
From the ocean leapt the God
Howling wrath and showering fire.
Glittering dreadfully, his high
Altar, dripping with destruction,
Showed above the flood and tempest.
And the speech of God was thunder,
And the whisper of God a roaring,
And the breath of God a groaning.
And he stood firm in a cloud's
Fiery smoke, as born of horror,
And the lightnings of his wrath,
The flame-serpents of his fury,
Crashing showered through the night.

The High Priest

So was God displeased, devouring
With the fires of corruption—
Save for that elected band
Which found refuge in the Ark—
All his children, shaped by him,
And Cihua-coatl's children.
And the holy mother of pain
Stands exiled, the pallid moon-star,
Lonely at night in empty heaven.
This is known to ye, ye princes.
What befel at last the ship of
Huitzi-ton, the youthful priest?

The First Scholar

When the thunder-words fell silent
And the waters ceased to rise,
Then the Ark lay safe among our
Peaceful lakes of Temixtitlan.
Walled around with snowy summits
Over which the sea had borne it,
It lay here in this high valley,
Floating calm, untouched and safe.
And as sign of our first coming
Still the water here is salt,
Like the sea shows ebb and flow.
And amid its mirrored waters,
As the place ordained by God,
Huitzi-ton set up a new
Atzlan, there in banishment;
For a soil of hope renewed,
For a haven of redemption,
For a haven full of quiet,

And of humble, pious service.
And we built gigantic temples
That the Flood might be remembered;
Holy fire pyramids
Glorifying Huitlipochtli's
Wrath in tasks of pious labour,
Consecrating the grievous love
Of the gracious mother of God.

The High Priest

Many blame us, that we guard
Strictly the remembrance
Of the punishment that came then,
That awaiting still the hour
When the Father will lead home
Once again his long-lost sons,
We renew the memory of his
Wrath in the sacred offering rite.
But to the greater honour of God,
Oh, what matters human blood?
When we tear the smoking heart
From the red breast of the offering,
And the god-given blood spurts out
As upon the day of judgment
Crimson foam and thundering flames,
Smoke and cloud of crimson rain
Spurted from the breast of God—
It is but a trivial
All too feeble sacrifice
If through our own mortal suffering
Reverently we image forth
The wrath and suffering of God.
He is cursed, who but in thought

Questions the inviolateness
Of the sacred altar of God.
And we have the firm assurance
That our God will keep his promise,
After long years of atonement
Made by us, good in his sight.
Now, most learned scribe, relate
How this too will come to pass.

The First Scholar

This affects, Prince Guatemotzin,
Your exalted, kingly house,
And your wise, imperial father.—
On the earth's key-stone enthroned,
Bearer of all holy runes,
And ancient and god-granted power,
He is blood of Huitzi-ton.
So he is one chosen out,
And you are a chosen people.
And our hope stands firm in you.
And the promise is that God, in
Sign of reconciliation
With the loved, the rich in suffering
Mother of Heaven, and with his seed,
Will send forth his sons anew.
And the lightning brood will issue
From the newly shapen, spicy
Caves of Atzlan once again.
O'er the vast, primeval ocean
Safely they will ride in mighty
Ships until they come to us.
And they will bring home their brothers
To the mount of Paradise.

Cacamatzin

Strange! Most wonderful and strange!
Almost thou persuad'st me—true!

The High Priest

Almost we believe. Thou sayest
That these fair-skinned, mighty giants
Truly are the promised, happy
Messengers of eternal peace,
Children of God and gods themselves?
Hear now what we have discovered
Of these beings, by secret ways.

The First Sacrificial Priest

Quetzalcoatl's priestly train—
Soft, ecstatic lovers of God—
Have received them with sweet hymns,
Them, so dreadful and uncomely.
Truly they are much more like
Children of some wrathful god
Than of ours. One might think almost
That no sea had flung them landward,
But a flaming mountain's mouth had
Vomited them upon our land.
Yet they come with fire which thunders,
And in truth command the lightning,
As not yet man's son has done.
They consume their foes with fire.
And as ancient scriptures foretold,
They deal death with crooked sickles.

Qualpopoca

They are knaves and murderers,

Savage beasts; the human form
Which they carry, mere deception.

The First Sacrificial Priest

And yet there are signs and wonders,
Things which might confound us all.
They were first themselves to say
That they bring us a redeemer
Who will lead us back to God.
And they honour the three holy
Crucifixes in our temple,
And they carry, like our king,
Round their necks, the sacred amulet.
As with us, the everlasting
Fire burns ever on their altars.
Even as we here partake
The flesh of God and drink his blood,
So their priests are wont to do.
Yea, and more than that: the image
Of the sinless bearer of grief—
Our most vigilantly guarded
And most fathomless mystery—
This they carry ever with them:
The all-suffering Tonatiuh.
For it is inherited sin,
Not our own, that we must expiate—
And they carry, too, the picture
Of our holy serpent-mother,
Bearing the child upon her bosom
With the moon beneath her feet.
Our redeemer will lead with him
Fabulous beasts, tradition says.
And they have these with them, too.

Qualpopoca

If the mighty Huitlipochtli
Sends such saviours down as these,
Then is Hell more dear to me
Than his new-created kingdom.

Cacamatzin

Then it is your firm opinion,
We should bow our necks before them?
We should henceforth be compliant
To these men, like beaten hounds?

The High Priest

Princes, friends! Now let us end.
This event, which overleaps
Wonder's bounds, needs all we can of
Circumspection, ardent search,
Till comprehension is complete.
Are they gods, then they must show it.
Here at Huitlipochtli's altar
Truth alone avails. Transgression
And deceit reveal themselves.
What is that?

[From the direction of a side-entrance the groaning of a heavy door on its hinges is audible. Immediately afterwards the sound of many circumspect footsteps. A strong light approaches along the passage. At length appears Pedro de Alvarado, *a torch in his left hand, in his right a naked sword. Some twenty Spanish knights follow him; after these*

several soldiers with muskets. The assembly springs to its feet.

The First Sacrificial Priest

Who let you in?

Pedro de Alvarado

A good Toltec who desired his
Soul's salvation. By your leave.

The First Sacrificial Priest

And what seek ye here?

Pedro de Alvarado

Instruction!
Is it true, you've idols here
Kneaded out of herbs and simples,
And glued fast with human blood?

The First Sacrificial Priest

Knave, how can you be so hardy,
Here in his high and sacred temple,
To insult the sacred Godhead?

Pedro de Alvarado

I see naught of any godhead
In this obscene murderer's den.
I see but a greedy, lustful
Demon to whom men are slaughtered.

[*He advances towards a side-altar.* Guatemotzin *throws himself in his way.*

Guatemotzin

Stop! You reach that o'er my body!

Pedro de Alvarado

Not a mountain-heap of bodies,
Stripling, such as thine or theirs,
Will prevent me if I wish to
Sweep away these filthy idols,
Which insult the one true God.

Qualpopoca

Thou heap'st corpses to thy god;
Yet forbiddest human sacrifice
To us here, Tonatiuh?

Pedro de Alvarado

By Saint James, yea, that do I!
And each gallant Spaniard here
Would do even as I do.
But who art thou? Ha, I know thee!
Good, that we have met, for see,
If again I want to seek thee,
It will be beside thy blood-block.
This is the very hero, comrades,
Who men say, not long ago
Offered up one of our brothers.

Father Olmedo

Naught is proven, Alvarado.
Pr'ythee, follow my advice:
Do not go a footstep farther.

The Spaniards

Death to the villain!

Father Olmedo

Hold, now! No
Violence here. Let not the demons
Of this diabolical temple
Steal from you all human feeling.
Be Christians, be calm and clear.

Pedro de Alvarado

Good, then! He may for the present
Go without due punishment.
We'll revenge another time!
But a task that is half-finished
Is far worse than ten undone;
Brings but loss instead of gain.
Priests of Baal, where then is your
Mighty Baal? Ye priests of Moloch,
Where is your fire-spitting Moloch,
Whom you cram with human flesh?

Father Olmedo

O, turn back now, Alvarado!

Pedro de Alvarado

Nay, in the name of the three in one
God, my father, forward, forward!—
Are ye human? Savage beasts
Are compassionate beside you!

The High Priest

[*Who is calmly regarding everything.*
He is stricken by some madness.

GUATEMOTZIN

[*Has put himself again in the path of* ALVARADO *to protect one of the threatened images of the god.*

If thou art a son of the sun
Thou can'st see in me another.
I am Guatemotzin, of the
Sun-born lineage of the king.
Yea, I am. Know'st thou me not?

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

No! But hold: and art thou truly?
Good! Ah, now I recollect thee.
Out of my way, and I will spare thee—
But thy gods I will not spare.

[ALVARADO *and his Spaniards rush against an altar on which stands a precious vessel of gold. Save for the* HIGH PRIEST *who, elevated, has taken his place at the High Altar, all the Toltecs press round the vessel to protect it.*

GUATEMOTZIN

Lightning burn thy flesh to ashes
If thou touchest with unclean
Hands this three-times holy, holiest
Vessel of the temple, which the
Blood of God has sanctified.

FATHER OLMEDO

O turn back now, Alvarado!
Bridle your holy eagerness,
For the devil knows to trap men
Even through it into great sin.

Pedro de Alvarado

Tell us, Bernal Diaz, what
They keep watch upon in this
Loathesome, scandalous vessel of shame?
What filth or what excrement
They raise here before their idol?
Human hearts and human blood!

[*Turning to the* Spaniards.

Know this is a slaughter-house.
Christoval de Guzman counted
Hundred and eighty thousand skulls,
Skulls of slaughtered men and brothers,
Piled behind this Moloch's cave,
Piled up in a ghastly hill.

Qualpopoca

Temple robbers and defilers!
Blasphemers and infidels!
Come ye not with tools of death?
Yea, you wave confessed the murderous
Sharp-edged sickles in your hands.
Do you not mow men like grass?
You would master Huitlipochtli,
Him, eternal from the beginning,
Omnipresent and almighty?
What you are, I tell you here:
Litter, droppings of a white
Hellish she-wolf who received
Seed from some foul and accursed
Spirit of the nether abyss.
Being that you rob our treasures,
Ambush and seduce our women;
Quetzalcoatl's chaste priestesses
Bear from the temple to your beds.

And you heap up precious stones,
Gold and raiment which you've stolen;
For your word's a lie, your smile
Falsehood, and poison is in your gaze.
Whom you fondle you betray.
And transgression you call God.

Pedro de Alvarado

Let this washerwoman babble.
Down with the cursed toys, I say!

[*The vessel and the image behind it are torn from the altar.*

Once again!

[Pedro de Alvarado *in front, the Spaniards prepare to throw themselves against the High Altar. When they see the* High Priest, *they draw back startled.*

You hang back, Spaniards,
To prepare a place to honour
The blest Mother of our Saviour?
Vitzliputzli be accursed,
And the Virgin blest forever!

[*He and the Spaniards rush against the High Altar. But the* High Priest *lifts before them with both hands a crucifix. By the light of the torches they all see the carven image of Cihua-coatl, the Mexican Mother of Pain. She has her foot on a serpent and holds a child in her arms, strikingly resembling Mary, the Mother of God. The Spaniards fall back, cross themselves, and sink on their knees.*

[*Cry from the Spanish ranks.*

A miracle!

Father Olmedo

[*Also kneeling.*

Truly it is
A great miracle, a marvel!
In this new-discovered world,
In the darksome heathen temple
Jesus on the Cross keeps watch,
And the Virgin with the child!

SEVENTH SCENE

In the palace of MONTEZUMA *in Temixtitlan. A hall with a wide door in the background which leads on to a spacious terrace looking on the lake. Stairs lead down to the landing-place, where Toltec servants with torches are posted.*

Time: just before dawn.

The FIRST *and* SECOND SCHOLAR *walk in subdued conversation up and down.*

THE FIRST SCHOLAR

Terrible in truth this deed;
And the folk begin to murmur.

THE SECOND SCHOLAR

Yet they cowered on their knees,
So 'tis said, when they beheld
Cihua-coatl, our holy
Mother of Pain. Was it even so?

THE FIRST SCHOLAR

Yea, they did in very truth—
Was it for Cihua-coatl,
Or the priest who in his hands
Held the cross—I do not know.
But that altar still is sacred.
Yet their fury sees no bounds;

And had not the priest of Christ
Made them finally to give over,
Then would all our holy places
Be naught else than wreck and ruin.

The Second Scholar

Already have the temple priests had
Counsel with the king about it.
They declare that their most sacred,
Their most ancient and holy vessel,
Has been stolen by the strangers:
Treasure incommensurable
Not because of gold or stone
That are in it, but because
Ancient runes of God are there.
Are these white men robbers, then?

The First Scholar

Fearful is their lust for gold.
Gold, but gold, not how 'tis fashioned
To fair shapes by artists' hands.
No, they gloat on it, itself.
And they know where they can find it,
Be it ever so safely hidden,
As a dog finds buried carrion.

The Second Scholar

Worthy friend, speak softly, softly!
Here will every word be frowned at
Which does not in full approve
Of the land's unbidden guests.—
Lust for gold fills them, 'tis true;
And with rage for gold possessed,
They would, giving scarce a thought to 't,

Tear from heaven the golden God,
The God of the sun, compassionate,
Could they reach him with their hands
As their eyes can scan his tears.

The First Scholar

We are of one mind, I see:
These white men are mad with greed.

The Second Scholar

Oh, they're so quite openly!
And the treasures of the king,
Which his holy sire bequeathed him,
Are long since not what they were.

The First Scholar

So 'tis whispered by the people
Secretly. But every nerve
Of my being cries 'tis false!
What, those priceless, immemorial
Symbols which from out our race's
Soul arose as if self-shapen—
In uncountable meanings rich,
And in precious store of wisdom
Drawn from deeps of every time—
These become mere robbers' booty!
Is not each of these things sacred
Holy, yea, inviolable,
Even as our ruler's person?
And they melt them down in furnaces,
Hammer and thump them into formless
Thick and meaningless lumps of metal!
Who betrayed the treasure?

The Second Scholar

The king's
Great and open soul betrayed it.
Guileless, as was ever his wont,
Heeding not the princes' warnings,
He throws open all his chambers.
And who knows not well his open
And too kingly, generous hand?

The First Scholar

With the people trouble's brewing:
Threatening signs come fast and thick.
King and people are divided.
Qualpopoca is in flight.
Cacamatzin has gone home,
Is intrenched in his chief city.
Fear and hope were joined in one
At the entry of these strangers;
But the hope too quickly vanished—
Only fear lords o'er us now.
It is come: the holy father
Has declared to all the priesthood
Truth at last, naked and clear.
From the bird Ti-hui-tochan,
Who hears ever the voice of God,
He has learned: these strangers are the
First-born enemies of God.

The Second Scholar

I am stricken by these tidings.
Now there will be deep division
Ere the question which perplexes
Us is made plain to all men.
The Totonacs, the first dwellers

In this land—the holy father
Means, in brief, these are our guests;
A remnant of that giant race
Who did mock the sun and jibe
At the sacred runes of God!
But the emperor thinks not so,
He, the true son of the sun!
He, on earth God's holiest vessel,
He, God's wisdom incarnate,
Calls these men "God's messengers,"
And he loves them as himself.
Speak no more: here comes the guard.

[*Two Spanish soldiers walk past, their eyes regarding greedily all that they see.*

The First Scholar

What! Here in the emperor's palace,
Here they come, and armed, too?

The Second Scholar

Every door is held by them.
Night and day the smallest motion
Of the king is watched by spies.

The First Scholar

Oh, great shame has fallen on
The world empire of the Toltecs!

[Marina *passes quickly through the room and whispers with the guard.*

Who, then, is this maid?

The Second Scholar

The evil
Spirit of her native land,

And the strangers' faithfullest tool.

[Marina *comes quickly over to the speakers.*

Marina

Is the emperor's majesty,
Worthy friends, returned already
From his morning on the lake?

The Second Scholar

Thou com'st early here to ask.
And what purpose brings thee here, then?

Marina

The exalted Tonatiuh
Has desire to see the king.

The Second Scholar

Even before the sun has risen
Clear above the mountain's head!
Has he, then, such great impatience?

Marina

Yea, most worthy friend, he has.

[Guatemotzin *hastens in.*

Guatemotzin

Is my father in the palace?

The Second Scholar

Not yet, but expected soon.
Every day the king leaves earlier

In his gondola, and later
Every day returns again.

GUATEMOTZIN

Who is with him?

THE SECOND SCHOLAR

In three skiffs
He is followed, as his use is,
By his singers and musicians.

GUATEMOTZIN

O, my god-begotten father,
Makes not night yet into day!
Surely the day is still enough
For his watchful eyes to study.
[*To* MARINA.
Say from me to thy white giant
That Prince Guatemotzin hates him!

THE SECOND SCHOLAR

Prince, I cannot hide from you
Your father's heavy wrath awaits you.
Come with me, and do not brave
Yet awhile your father's glance.
I will tell you briefly: he
Knows of everything that happened
There in Huitlipochtli's temple;
And he disapproves your deed.

GUATEMOTZIN

What! He is displeased that I
Guarded our ancestral gods?

The Second Scholar

Yea, 'tis so. For the true gods,
So he says, need not our shield.
But the more particular ground
Of his censure, that lies deeper.
He mistrusts you, and because
You had counsel, separate, secret,
With the priests of Huitlipochtli,
And the princes of your faction.

Guatemotzin

All the better! All the clearer
It will be 'twixt him and me.

First Spanish Soldier

[*To the second.*

Yes, the devil! I hear already
Jingling, and there come the lights.
Fires of hell, it will be better
Both for him—and devil take me—
For us too, when we can lay
The black mongrel by the ears.

[*A large crowd of Toltec servants now fill the terrace with lights; while the boat of* Montezuma, *amid the sounds of strange and melancholy music, comes to land in the dawn, which is reddening. Very slowly* Montezuma *ascends the stairs. All, except the Spanish soldiers and the torch-bearers, throw themselves to the ground.*

When the savages are together
We've been told not to disturb them.
Come, it's better to retire.

[*The two soldiers leave the hall.* Montezuma *now enters from the terrace.*

Montezuma

[*To* Marina, *who has thrown herself at his feet.*

Ah, my first glance falls on thee!
That's a favourable omen
For the day, even now beginning.
How, then, is my brother? Speak!

Marina

The sun's son desires to see
Your imperial countenance.
I am sent to crave the favour.

Montezuma

Always the way is free—he knows it.
Why has he not come himself?
Willingly I'd go to him.
O Marina, what strange hours
I lived out there on the waters.
Thou wilt understand it. Softly
I am freed there from the bondage
Of my bitter body of pain.
Yet from the dungeon, so they say,
Which holds fast the suffering prisoner—
Closed out from the light, unpitied—
From the dungeon one walks out,
Free again, not without sorrow.
And the vale of Anahuac,
Where in mirrors of clear lakes
The white summits bathe themselves
Is much more than a mere prison!

Yet the world's but grief, Marina.
Grief has been my nightly food
And the long day's satiation.
Ask me why, I cannot tell thee.
Yea, 'tis hard to think, and harder
Still to put in stumbling words.
Therefore is the parting hard.

Marina

Whither think you then to go,
Lord?

Montezuma

'Tis thou who ask'st me, whither?
See we not, then, open to both,
Thou and I, the golden land?
Through the self-same gleam of love,
Through the great, omnipotent wizard
In whose hand we both are held?
Nay, 'tis over. Here no lingering
More. Though in the light of farewell
The very dust of banishment
Should blossom sweet, miraculously.
[*To the* First Scholar.
Learned friend, most worthy friend,
Riddles were this morn again the
Playthings of my eager spirit.
Riddles silver-scaled swam round me
In the shadow of my barque,
Goggling at the torches' light.
Riddles fluttered in the rushes
And with cries of water-birds
Had my wisdom all confounded.
Riddles lay, a blood-red gleam

Spread upon the wavering flood.
And the countenance of our holy
Lunar mother lay there shuddering
In the wild play of illusion.
Why is there so much illusion
In the world? Where is it not?

The Second Scholar

Holy king, all saints and sages
Of all times till now lament
Even o'er this! And all have asked
This one question! But the answer
Slumbers in the eternal silence.

Montezuma

[*Has remarked* Guatemotzin.

Nay, I call thee not high-hearted
If thou darest thus to face
Thy father, Guatemotzin. Thou
Reckonest fast on my affection.
In that dost thou rightly, though
I can wield the ruler's arm,
And at will recall the power
Which as earthly god is mine.
I created thee; I can
Also destroy thee, Guatemotzin!
Yet fear not; for not a hair
Of my children will I harm,
Whose defection and whose blindness
Wound me to the very heart.
Yet but ask me: I will lighten
Readily thy coil of error.
Not my brother Cacamatzin,
Nor the dull-sensed Qualpopoca,

Has such knowledge as I have.
Neither guesses what the hour is,
What the day brings, what great deed.

Guatemotzin

Hast thou then, my kingly father,
Comprehended what the holy
Hatuey, our high priest says,
Of these strangers, these white men?

Montezuma

Nay, I do not gather wisdom
Touching these sons of the sun
From the priest; but he from me.

Guatemotzin

Yet to him came knowledge, father,
From the dove, Ti-hui-tochan,
Holy Ghost, and breath of Godhead,
Whose bright image even the strange
Giants hang beside their own
Idols, in high reverence.

Montezuma

What to me is Ti-hui-tochan,
That stale, crooning priestly dove,
Who myself have the proud eagle,
And the lightning for my sword.
Mighty is the condor's flight;
For he circles to the sun,
Bathes therein and burns to ashes,
That renewed down he might rush

Like a bolt through all the zones,
Flapping his mighty wings, unscathed.
He alone is my great servant,
He, my one true messenger.
'Twixt me and my heavenly kingdom
There needs not another one.

[CORTEZ, *attended by* PEDRO DE ALVARADO, FATHER OLMEDO, BERNAL DIAZ, LAS CASAS, GONZALO DE SANDOVAL, CHRISTOVAL DE GUZMAN *and* JERONIMO DE AGUILAR *enters. They remain at a ceremonious distance.*

My best welcome here, Malinche!

CORTEZ

Friend, I greet thee with all reverence.
We have come to say to thee
That the Spanish brigantines,
Thine own ships, are ready now,
And that, later in the morning,
Thou wilt see the giant hulks,
Full-sailed and with groaning masts,
Out there on the open water.

MONTEZUMA

A great spectacle! And will these
Godlike shapes by their own power
Voyage onward o'er the water?

CORTEZ

By the power of Heaven's breath!
Solely by the power of God!

Montezuma

Always when I look upon you
I am shamed by our poor blood;
And astonished hear your words,
And amazed see every bounteous
Sacred power like play in you.
But your deeds compel me ever
To still shuddering and wonder.
Take all this: naught here can pay you.

[*He makes a sign. Behind him appear in their order the three young princesses, his daughters, with their attendants. Along with them a crowd of servants carrying presents. They approach* Montezuma *at a sign from him.*

How, friends, could I stand before you
Had I not the gold I know
Gives you pleasure in its shining?

Cortez

[*Accepting costly and heavy gifts.*

Boundless truly is thy bounty!

Montezuma

Gold is good, but sweeter pleasure
You will find in this my daughter's
Gentle body still untouched.
Take her—for she loves thee. How then
Could she not love him I love?
She is thine! Take her away.

[*One of the princesses is led to* Cortez *and unveiled. She stands overcome with shame. He strokes her hair kindly and kisses her on the brow.*

Cortez

Spaniards know not what a slave is,
Princess! And thou comest in my
Keeping free, and as a Christian!

Montezuma

[*Walking along the Spanish ranks.*
Ah, your gaze, Don Alvarado,
Recently was crossed by mine
While it sought my daughter's eyes.
Take her, then! She loves you. Here—
Here is ancient, good but tardy
Blood from the olden, sun-born stem
Of the Aztecs, to make keener
With the fire of your young blood.

Cortez

Lord, it grieves me, but I must
Beg, alas, a hearing now
For a thing of deep import.

[*The Spaniards break involuntarily into their loud, exultant battle-cry of "Saint James!" Almost at the same time the Aztecs utter loud shouts of amazement. On the water there are seen four Spanish warships gliding along under full sail.*

Montezuma

What is this?

Cortez

Naught, worthy brother.

The Spaniards

Our good ships! Our brave ships!
See, our ancient brigantines
Sail again upon the water.

Cortez

Thanks to God and Martin Lopez.

Christoval de Guzman

To Seville, friends, to Seville!
Let's weigh anchor and away!

Jeronimo de Aguilar

O, if but this god-forsaken
Duck-pond were the open sea!

Bernal Diaz

God forgive me, I would like some
Neapolitan salami!

Jeronimo de Aguilar

Add to it three pints of dusky
Fiery wine of Malaga!

Cortez

Strange! I saw them cruising past
Ere your eyes were set upon them.
And upon the self-same moment
I stood firm first on the earth!
And now there's no time to lose.

MONTEZUMA

[*Altogether absorbed in gazing at the great, skimming European ships.*

Though I thought I was the highest,
You are greater, I see it now.
But how to encourage those
Who are poor of heart, you know not.
Help us, raise us, you are rich.
It is bitter—but the gods,
Who have blessed you bounteously,
And so long have but deceived us,
Show me at last our poverty.
Help us, help us with your strength!
If we should be past your help—
Then the old days come no more;
For what once appeared endurable
In my eyes is now but death.

CORTEZ

Now my grievance!

MONTEZUMA

Grievance!

CORTEZ

Yea, friend.

I accuse thy people touching
Black and unforgivable crime!
But this is for thee alone.

MONTEZUMA

[*Gives a sign. The greater part of his following retires. The remaining attendants range themselves at a ceremo-*

nious distance. Among these are GUATEMOTZIN *and the* FIRST *and* SECOND SCHOLARS. *Of the Spaniards there remain, also at a distance, but apart from the Aztecs,* FATHER OLMEDO, LAS CASAS *and* SANDOVAL.

Speak, Malinche!

CORTEZ

Thou wert to-day
Gracious beyond bounds, my brother.
Therefore I dare ask from thee
A great trial of thy faith.

MONTEZUMA

Name it.

CORTEZ

With one voice the men
Of my band, in solemn council
But now ended, have demanded
Qualpopoca's speedy death.

MONTEZUMA

Let him die, if he has blasphemed!

CORTEZ

Then he dies; for it is certain
That he has delivered up
Three brave Spaniards to be slaughtered
In the temple by your priests,
Victims to mad cannibals.
Nay, I do not jest, my brother,
And my prayer is half-command.

Therefore, pr'ythee, strictly order
That this demon be made captive
And delivered o'er to us.

Montezuma

I am judge, has he blasphemed!
He may perish—but through me!

Cortez

What set time, clearly determined,
Does thou desire, imperial lord,
To perform what is thy task?

Montezuma

Time, Malinche! What is that?

Cortez

No evasion! I know the Aztec
Loves to double like a serpent.
But forgive me: I confuse thee!
An escape's unthinkable.
Thou hast now ten-day's respite.
But if, when they're past, this murderer,
This conspirator still is living,
We will take as hostage—

Montezuma

Me?

Cortez

Nay, not thee, but a due choice
Of the princes of thy kingdom.

Montezuma

[*Softly drawing back.*

Come no nearer me, Malinche,
Else I might forget almost
That thou art of holy blood.
Be assured: the prince will perish.
For some time I've feared myself
His subversive, arrogant nature,
Which brings peril even to me.
But excuse me now, my brother,
For it is my accustomed hour,
Set aside to meditation.

[*He prepares to retire.*

Cortez

I respect thy wishes, brother.
But a play for two's begun.
Ere the final throw is cast
It is not my will that either
Of us two should leave the place.

Montezuma

Is that a command, Malinche?
Now it makes me glad that once
In my life I should know clearly
Whether I could bear with patience
If someone commanded me.

Cortez

[*Observing that* Montezuma *has once more turned to retire.*

What sounds to thee like an order
Is no seeming, that thou'lt know!

Nay, I beg thee, be composed!
If thou art not, thou must bear
Now what those are wont to do
Who indeed obey commands.

Montezuma

[*Lightly strikes his brow, as if brushing away a dream.*
[*Simply and as if speaking to himself.*
Nay, my mind is not in tune
To receive this babel-chatter
Of mere madness, empty air.
There's no one so credulous
As to think, in truth believe,
Something, someone could gainsay my
Freedom coming in and going
In the palace of my fathers.

Cortez

There's no time left now for babbling.
Stay and give me definite answer.
When does Qualpopoca die
His well-earned ignominious death?

Montezuma

When it pleases me: else, never!

Cortez

Hast thou said thy final word?

Montezuma

Now, now it draws nigh, Malinche.

Never as thou has any man
Self-destroyed his mould of Godhead.

CORTEZ

Sandoval, perform your duty.

[*The Spaniards have meantime appeared again, strengthened by thirty new soldiers. They are all armed to the teeth. At a sign from* SANDOVAL, *and with the speed of lightning, iron manacles are fastened round the ankles of* MONTEZUMA.

This, my gracious lord, is his
Majesty the emperor's
Royally appointed steward.
And so long as it's not certain
Whether you yourself are guilty
Of the Spaniard's death or not,
We shall hold you as a hostage.
What befalls Prince Qualpopoca
Whom you hesitate to punish,
It is that, in any case,
Which our justice should demand.
For his destiny has already
Been decided in our council.

[*The Aztec men of rank, among them The* FIRST *and* SECOND SCHOLARS, *led by* GUATEMOTZIN, *rank themselves in vain protest around* MONTEZUMA.

GUATEMOTZIN

Refuse! Scum! Repulsive litter
Of a stinking garbage heap!
Thou a god! You sons of God!
Mangy animals, nothing more!

MONTEZUMA

[Trembling, deeply stricken, has seized his son's hand, clings to it and strokes it softly and soothingly.

Peace, my child! Peace, Guatemotzin!
Peace, my bird Ti-hui-tochan,
Or rebuke me, but me only!
For—not hearking to thy call—
I betrayed my soul in blindness,
Trusting my eagle of the sun.

GUATEMOTZIN

Villains, take your hands away!
You do violence to our gods,
You contaminate our altars,
Plunder the riches of our churches,
Rob the temples of the Cross.
Now you dare to lay your hands,
Dare to lay your criminal hands,
On the person of our king,
The anointed Son of Heaven?

MONTEZUMA

See, he stands there, naked before God.
Think what blood we boast as ours!
Let us forget the churl! Keep silence!

CORTEZ

[To SANDOVAL *and the Spaniards.*

All in order now, I pray you.
Who is careless will repent it,
For he'll make us all repent!

[*He turns sharply in military style, and leaves.*

[*After* Cortez *has gone the Spaniards retire a little back from* Montezuma, *who is seated on a chair. They speak together in subdued tones. On the ground, around the feet of the king and kissing them, the weeping Aztecs are lying.* Guatemotzin, *his hand in that of his father, stands proudly and measures the Spaniards with a look of deadly hatred. From without comes the sound of awakening commotion among the people. Over the water, in the background, drift clouds of black smoke from the stake where* Qualpopoca *is being burnt.*

Montezuma

Guatemotzin, I must weep!
True, my folk will not endure this;
And this day's humiliation
Will perchance be clean forgotten
In a day long after this.
Yet, I must needs weep, my son,
Weep as I have never wept.

Guatemotzin

Qualpopoca dies now, father,
Perishes, bound to a pillar
Planted high upon a hill
Of dry wood prepared for him.
And the wood's already kindled,
And it flings up giant tongues
Over all the Spaniards' quarters.

Living, in the flames the hero
Fights his last and heaviest fight.

Montezuma

Woe to the world! Qualpopoca
Slew himself a Tonatiuh.
Dreadful must the atonement be!

Guatemotzin

Father! Father!

The First Scholar

Trouble him not!
Twilight veils his martyred soul,
For too much breaks in on him.

First Spanish Soldier

Do the chains pinch? They'll grow lighter.
First a little troublesome
Later you won't be without them.

Velasquez de Leon

Bring a litter!

Pedro de Alvarado

Not yet, friend.
We would rather wait a little.
All the streets are full of people,
And their threats give one to think.

Velasquez de Leon

Pish! their threats are but play-acting.
Throw the savage in a litter,

And convey him to our fortress
Even if 'tis with naked swords.
If 'tis late for that—well, then,
One good blow will strike him down here.

Montezuma

Must I to the Spaniard's quarters?

Guatemotzin

Not if 'tis against thy will.

Montezuma

Willingly shall I never go.

Pedro de Alvarado

[*With ironical gaiety.*

Late most reverend mighty lord,
Human fate is treacherous.
Were I you, I would show good
Countenance before the event.
And our captain loves you well.
If we were ofttimes your guest
Be our guest now for a while:
Naught is lacking that can please you.

Montezuma

And I shall, like Qualpopoca,
Die, an offering to the fire,
Fastened to the wooden stake?
Thus you consummate the marriage
'Twixt your heroes and the heavens!
Is there none to help me? Rescue!

[*In the background weeping servants appear carrying a very mean litter.* Las Casas *and* Father Olmedo *approach* Montezuma *with kind intent.*

Father Olmedo

God in Heaven is my witness
How I'm grieved by your misfortune.
Yea, our general's decision
Was to me all unexpected.
But, believe me, there is nothing
That you need fear for your life.

Las Casas

Take as many servants with you
As you may desire or wish.
The apartments which await you
Have been furnished with the richest.
And in spite of his late anger
At the deed of Qualpopoca
Ferdinando Cortez loves you,
As I know, more than himself.

Montezuma

[*Shakes his head.*
Not long since I, too, believed that.

Father Olmedo

Nay, the general has spoken
Round and clear to me about it.
If he begs you to stay henceforth
In the Spanish quarters 'tis
For your greater safety only.

For his quarters are well guarded
While your own imperial
House lies open to your foes,
Foes whom you possess, you know it,
In the heart of your own people.

Montezuma

[*To* Guatemotzin.

Stay with me!

Guatemotzin

Forever, father!

Montezuma

Stay with me!

Guatemotzin

Yea, till death!

Montezuma

Stay with me! O stay with me!

EIGHTH SCENE

A room in the Spaniards' quarter. Part is cut off by a wooden trellis. In it stands a Roman Catholic altar with the image of Saint James, a silver crucifix and a golden vessel for the Host. On the opposite wall there is a wide door which, when it is open, leads on to a balcony from which one can look over the great court-yard of Theocali and the temple of Huitlipochtli.

PEDRO DE ALVARADO, *and sitting in a circle round him,* VELASQUEZ DE LEON, BERNAL DIAZ, JERONIMO DE AGUILAR *and several other officers.*

It is about mid-day.

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

I have chosen to call you here
To take stock of our position;
For by virtue of full powers
Given to me by Ferdinando
Cortez when he left the city,
I am now his regent here.
Now we all know what occasion
Took our captain to the coast.
A fleet has landed, Spaniards
'Neath the Spanish flag, and they—
Shame to tell—contest our right

To this land which we have conquered!
'Tis a certain fellow Narvaez—
Whom I cannot bring myself
To call a gentleman of honour—
Leads a mob of pirates here,
Sweepings of humanity,
To steal from us, step by step,
This fair land, this world, which we
Made our own by well-worn battle,
Yea, by braving peril extreme,
Flinging our lives into the balance.
But the heavy hand of Cortez
Will light on him, that is certain.

First Officer

Yet it can't be hidden: they say
That this Narvaez has full powers,
And what's more, the emperor's seal.

Pedro de Alvarado

O, if high and windy speech were
Witness of these vaunted powers,
Then he has them, sure enough.
I acknowledge freely that
Since the mighty Genoan
Opened the West Indian coast
All the adventurers in Spain
And in Portugal too have lounged
Round the kind Castilian throne,
Lusting to be granted somehow
Letters giving them full powers,
Which are nothing more than mere
Sanction for robbery and murder.
It's become an evil practice

This unleashing of new hordes
Of wolves, more conscienceless than wolves,
Brutes who shame the name of Spaniard
And the name of Christian;
Savager at last themselves,
Than the wildest savages
Turn their fangs against their kindred.

SECOND OFFICER

Eighty horses and ten cannon,
And eight hundred men at arms:
So 'tis said these Spaniards lead;
And they ride even now at anchor
In the harbour of Saint Juan.

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

But we have heard enough of that.
Soon will Ferdinando Cortez
Draw the teeth of these good wolves.
He has taken away, 'tis true,
Only half our garrison,
And he leaves for us the heavy
Duty to hold fast the city
Temixtitlan, for the Spanish
Banner, with the other half.
Now, this can and must be done,
Though the tumult in the city
Visibly each day grows wilder.
If Fernando Cortez should go
Farther still in his far errand,
Truly it is possible
That we may be yet compelled
To defend ourselves against
A common and concerted seizure

Of these quarters where we lie.
We must think what must be done
In the event of an assault,
And, in case it should break forth,
Which may have happened even now,
To make null its consequences.

Velasquez de Leon

Our most precious card is this:
That the emperor Montezuma
Whom we hold as living hostage
Still remains safe in our hands.
If he should escape, then truly
Our case would be critical.
But our hostage keeps us safe.
Yet that we might not neglect
This one powerful advantage,
I propose now that the prisoner
Should be guarded still more strictly
And be kept in solitude.

Las Casas

There's no need at all, Velasquez;
I will answer with my life
For the person of the emperor.

Velasquez de Leon

Yes, and how will your death help us
Once the savage has escaped?

Las Casas

If he's savage, I know Spaniards
Who are still more savage, then.

Velasquez de Leon

O we are not scholars here—
Who perchance in Salamanca
Hold dispute o'er subtle theses!
No, we hold a council of war;
And my counsel is—the savage
Should be given no chance to escape us,
Should be fettered, strongly guarded,
Even if it is in a dungeon.
What advantage is it to us
That he goes free through our quarters,
He and his superfluous court,
Smelling out all our affairs!
In such way as these we pamper
The enemy in our own house.

[*The heavy sound of drumming in the temple is heard.*

First Officer

Captains, first a simple question:
If unrest mounts in the city
And rebellion is in train,
Wherefore was permission given
To celebrate this heathen feast
In the temple of Theocalli,
Which attracts a hundred thousand
Savages here into the town?

Pedro de Alvarado

It is best to ratify
What, denied, would still take place.

[*He rises, walks over to the door on the left, and opens it. One sees over the*

balcony on to the courtyard guarded by great walls which abut on the Spanish quarter and is set aside for the great Theocalli, whose giant pyramid can be seen.

For in such ways we can save
At least the semblance of our power.
But 'tis worth considering
If the tumult of the festival
May not give us the occasion
To make our position stronger.
And, to make myself more clear,
I would beg you to come hither
And be pleased to cast a glance
At the scene down in the courtyard.

[*With the exception of* Las Casas *all the Spaniards go with* Pedro de Alvarado *on to the balcony. They can be seen there and their conversation can be heard.*

As you see, the courtyard's pranked
With festoons of festive flowers.
When the priests have fed their Moloch
With the sacrificial flesh
In the steaming temple caverns,
And have sung, in their own fashion
To the end their devil's mass,
Then the hellish brotherhood
Lead the folk forth in the sun.
Mark me, too, not common folk,
But, up to about six hundred
Of the most select, exclusive
Mexican nobility.

Velasquez de Leon

Nay, speak further, Alvarado!
Why do you stop? Go on! Go on!

Pedro de Alvarado

Good! Then pray you, look on this
Place, this courtyard with great care,
As 'twere even a battlefield.

Jeronimo de Aguilar

Not a battlefield, a trap.
Yes, a trap with but two doors,
One here and the other there.
By the salvation of my soul,
Except for that temple gate
And this smaller door just here
There's no loop-hole I can see.
And, unless one were a sparrow,
One could not get o'er these walls.

Pedro de Alvarado

Of my mind, friend, on that point.
Now I ask you once again
To consider our position.
Truly, you can't call it rosy!
That being so, here is the question:
Whether we are at such advantage
That, without considering well,
We can let slip this advantage
Without using it as we may?

Velasquez de Leon

[*After a pause of general embarrassment.*
Is it not a shame to let this
Festival of Moloch end?
And not take, now that we can,
These hellish pyramids of Belial?
All the more, seeing that already
We have consecrated there
Relics of the blessed Virgin,
And of Saint James, our patron saint,
And the sacred heart of Jesus.
See, there goes Olmedo now,
Gliding hither from the door.
He's not dared to celebrate
The high mass on this feast day.
Is it well, can it be borne,
That in the Virgin's holy temple,
In the house of Jesus Christ,
They should work abomination,
Sacrifice men on the block?
For although we were assured
That to-day it would not happen,
It has happened, sure enough.

Las Casas

Don Velasquez, you are wrong;
For I know it has not happened.

Bernal Diaz

Why do you not take the gown,
Don Las Casas? You've no stomach
For the business of stern war.
Why then do they beat their drums?

Why—to drown the shrieks of pain
When the victim's heart is torn out!
And, as I may win salvation,
I did hear these shrieks but now.

Christoval de Guzman

Devil take it, I hear the howling
Daily, and dreaming in the night!

Jeronimo de Aguilar

If we could believe Las Casas
We should feel most highly flattered
To be fodder for Huitlipochtli.
What a pity we are not!
Then we could this very day,
Larded and greased with loving care,
Stew within the Aztecs' pots,
And provide a tender, delicate
Sunday feast most to their taste.

Las Casas

Nay, my lords, you are mistaken.
For the Aztecs say to me
That the Christian's flesh is bitter,
Yea, 'tis quite uneatable.

[Father Olmedo *enters.*

Velasquez de Leon

What's ado in the temple, Father?

Father Olmedo

Though I cannot swear it yet,
'Tis as if they made an offering.

That gigantic mass of stone
Seemed but now to listen dumbly.
Yea, its monstrous shape appeared
All at once, it seemed to me—
Rising in a sort of lust—
As if hideously ensouled.

Pedro de Alvarado

Now, and I too, by Saint James!
All the more seeing I'm no hill of
Stones, but Pedro Alvarado,
And a soldier of Jesus Christ.
And I feel—I, too—a sort of
Lust which palpitates within me.

Father Olmedo

Shall I speak the very truth?
An unnamed and fearful anguish
Goads me, as if up on high
Jesus Christ were nailed on the Cross.

Pedro de Alvarado

What, my comrades! You are pale,
And you bite your lips, I see!
Something gleams within your eyes
No true man could misconstrue.
What the hour demands is clear.
Bring to mind what Samuel said
Once to Saul: "Saul, go thou forth,
Slay thou the Amalekites,
Man and woman, grey-beard, suckling;
Slay thou ox and ass and camel;

Leave naught living which thou findest;
For the Lord thy God has given
All that race into thy hands."

FATHER OLMEDO

Yet be not too hasty, Pedro.

LAS CASAS

May I beg you for instruction
As regards your latest plan,
That I may make strict arrangement?

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

Well, why not? No: I am sorry
That I cannot fully sate yet
Your desire for information.
For the orders to be given
Do not touch you for this time.
Follow me!

[*He goes out.* VELASQUEZ DE LEON, BERNAL DIAZ, JERONIMO DE AGUILAR, CHRISTOVAL DE GUZMAN *and all the officers follow him.* LAS CASAS *and* FATHER OLMEDO *remain behind.*

LAS CASAS

Shame, father, shame!
Now you have—to your undoing—
Sprinkled oil upon the fire
Whose flames else might not have grown,
To become a conflagration.

Father Olmedo

Friend, what do you mean? I am
All amazed at what you say.
What's in train here? Speak, I pray you!

Las Casas

As I much fear, father, evil.
I still hope I am deceived.
Yet if you do not oppose with
All your power the secret plan
Which in Alvarado's head
Ripens like a poisonous fruit
At this moment, that can happen
Which will shame the name of Spaniard
Till the farthest end of time.

Father Olmedo

He is rash, and foolish too.
All the same he's Cortez' favourite,
And as by some curious magic
He's become the universal
Favourite of these savages.
But—for, friend, you terrify me—
I will do what one man can
To repair my unwitting error.

[*He goes out to find* Alvarado *and his Spaniards. One can perceive from the noise which comes in that the temple courtyard is filled with a peaceful and cheerful crowd. Suddenly the drums of Theocalli sound again. As they cease a wild music begins announcing that the temple dances have started in the court-*

yard. Montezuma *with a very small attendance, fallen from his former state, enters from the next room. With him are* Marina, Gomara, *and a few Aztec men of rank: in all not more than five people.* Montezuma *is not bound.*

Marina

Here your majesty can see,
If you wish, yourself unseen,
All that's happening in the courtyard:
You can regard it here in peace.

Montezuma

What sayst thou, Marina? Speak!

Marina

Your imperial majesty
Said but now to us in there
That in former, by-gone years
You found deep and sacred pleasure
In the holy temple dances.

Montezuma

Yea, they pleased me to the heart;
And the loveliest dancers were
Ever my four sons, and with them
A full hundred of their kinsmen.

Marina

Many of your majesty's
Kinsmen are down there to-day
Also, dancing in the May Dance.

Will it please my lord from here
To regard the holy dance?

Montezuma

Nay, Marina!

Marina

Why not, my lord?

Montezuma

[*Regards his feet fixedly.*
Ah, because I am still in chains!

Marina

You are not in chains, my lord.
That was but a soldiers' error.
O, forget it now, forgive it!
Did Malinche not beseech you,
After the deed, to pardon him?

Montezuma

[*As before.*
Yet this error of the soldiers
Left behind two burning circles.

Marina

Nay, my lord, your flesh is whole.
[*She kneels down and strokes his ankles with her hands.*

Gomara

[*On the balcony, looking out.*
O, this dance is blasphemous!

LAS CASAS

Think you so? Yet did not David
Dance before the sacred ark,
Almost naked, as 'tis written,
And with all his heart and soul?
If he honoured God in that,
So these honour their strange idols:
But with equal piety.

GOMARA

Friend, be wary, or you'll be
In the end Aztec yourself.

MONTEZUMA

[*Sees* LAS CASAS *and goes up to him as if seeking help. Deeply moved he lays his hand trustfully in that of the Spaniard. His lips quiver.*

I am very sick, Las Casas!
Yea, till now I have not known
That a man could be so sick.

GOMARA

'Tis the custom, worthiest prince,
Reverently to bow the knee
Before the altar of our Church
And the images of our saints
And the body of Jesus Christ.

MONTEZUMA

[*To* LAS CASAS.

Friend, what does he say?

Gomara

Your highness
Should know, 'tis expedient
For the salvation of your soul
And in reverence to old custom
To show lowly reverence
Before the altar of the true God.
Every Christian spirit must
Shudder where this is omitted.

Montezuma

[*Stamps his foot and turns away.*
Leave me!

Las Casas

You have chosen badly
Time and place, most worthy father,
To convert this great, poor king:
And the means, methinks, not good.

Gomara

I am guided by the Word,
And you should bethink yourself
Whether you serve your God indeed
By thus standing in the way
Of the preachers of our faith.
[*He goes out in visible anger.*

Montezuma

[*Leans his brow against* Las Casas *and breaks into passionate weeping.*
Friend, who comprehends the abasement

Which I must endure each day?
And who comprehends the loss?
And my martyrdom, who knows it?

Las Casas

[*Soothingly.*
Look on Him who hangs on the Cross.

Montezuma

Terror grips me when I see him
For his vengeance is terrible.

Las Casas

What can your highness mean? Nay, tell me!

Montezuma

His revenge is fell, malignant,
And he drags me to the abyss.
He's a murderous magician,
One who apes God's sufferings.
He betrayed my lands for me.
He betrayed my God for me.
He betrayed me, me myself!

[*A mighty universal cry of joy out of the temple courtyard breaks in upon the king's words.*

Marina

Lord, they have caught sight of you,
And the festive multitude
Fill the air with glad huzzas.

Montezuma

[*Turns away, as if shivering with cold.*
Close the door.

[*Two soldiers of the Spanish guard close the door.*

First Soldier

'Tis all the better
That he's thought of that himself;
For we must prevent the crowd
From seeing too much of his face.

Montezuma

Oh, I am wounded near to death.
Like the arrow-pierced condor
Moaning I stumble o'er the earth,
Trailing low my helpless wings,
Wet with blood, most like a heavy,
Far too great, superfluous,
Odd, absurd, accusing garment.

Las Casas

There's no doubt, Cortez our leader,
At his return here from the coast,
Will give you again—of this I'm certain—
All your old, full liberty.

Montezuma

Who are ye? Tell me, Las Casas.
When I wrestle with myself
In heavy thought through heavy days
This still is unsolved, the last,

The bitterest of all my questions.
Children of God you call yourselves,
And truly in power you're like the gods;
Like Huitzi-ton,—and as he came
Over great waters, so came you.
And you knew that you would find us
Here in the holy mountain valley
Of our exile, where our heavenly
Father hid us safe away.
And you brought with you in chains
That lost beast of fable which
Many hundred years ago
Huira-cotcha led with him
When he came first to the earth.
Your commander calls you servants,
Mediators for One higher—
And he carries lightning, thunder,
With him as his testimony.
But far better you're attested
By the Cross's holy symbol,
By the likeness of that God who
Suffering died, and from the grave
Glorious up to heaven flaming,
Rose again to life made new.
And you praise the Mother of God,
Honour her who bore the Christ,
Who at night with pallid head
Shines beneath upon her womb's
Trembling, fluctuate creation.
And you say yourselves you bring
Joyous tidings of a godhead.
Now it has been shown you are
A band of flinty-hearted robbers,
Who with cunning and with violence
Rob our people, great and small.

You stuff coffers full of treasure,
Steal the temple's sacred gold,
Show no reverence to the gods,
But much rather violate them,
Flagrantly smite them in the dust.—
Without sword, even as this Saviour,
Full of love, I came to meet you.
And I called your leader brother,
And believing heard your message;
Gladly met my mediator.
As reward for love and faith
I've been flung in iron fetters,
And in anguish made to drink
A potion brewed from serpents' slaver,
From a cup, by you much honoured,
From the cup of full abasement!
Tell me who you are, Las Casas!

Las Casas

Who we are is hard to tell.
Christians, baptised in the name of
God, the three in one, 'tis true,
Yet we waver for the period
Of our lives 'twixt hell and heaven.
And we will first on the Judgment
Day be told in surety
Whether eternal blessedness
Or the abyss will be our portion.

Montezuma

I must laugh against my will
Over what thou sayest now;
Over these most joyous tidings,
These news of the hellish judge

Whom—imprisoned here between
Hell and heaven—you await.
Thanks for these most glorious tidings,
They indeed are meant for me.
And as true's a God's in heaven,
Living, who's a righteous judge,
He will set me eye to eye
There with Ferdinando Cortez
On the final Day of Judgment.
And I wait now for that day!
Open the door for me, Marina!
I will give my people greeting,
For the words of this good knight
Have refreshed, in sooth, my soul.
Ah, 'tis well! Heaven veils itself,
A few heavy drops are falling,
And God hides himself in darkness.
But the weeping One will lighten!
And the lightening One will speak!
And the speaking One will judge!
And the judging One will save!
And the Saviour, on the throne
Of his radiant light ascending,
Will renew the world and me!

First Soldier

[*To* Marina, *who is in the act of opening the door leading on to the balcony.*

By your leave, Donna Marina!
Do not open: 'tis forbidden.

Las Casas

I accord her my permission,
And I am your officer here.

Second Soldier

Keeping guard upon this savage
Is our martyrdom at night
And the misery of our days.
We are always cursed up hill
And down dale on his account,
Now by this one, now by that.

[*The door is opened, and music mingled with the wild cries of the religious dance is heard.* Montezuma *puts one foot on to the balcony, but does not go farther out.*

Montezuma

[*After a pause, in which he seems absorbed in the spectacle, moved to rapture.*

O, how great a scene is this!
The old sacrificial temple's
Courtyard all transformed beneath its
Burden of rich-coloured flowers!
Come! Behold the peoples' pride
Standing there in splendid ranks.
How the jewels wink and shine!
What wild glory of heavy gold!
See, the mighty in green raiment,
Crowned with many-coloured feathers!
There, the priests, the crimson cross
Woven on their snow-white robes.
And the old, almighty-thoughted
Holy father walks among them,
Himself a rock, upholder of rocks
And of this temple, who has towered it
Close to the heavens by godlike power.

And the cock, the sacred bird,
Shines out from his lifted cross.

Las Casas

I'd give anything to know
What the meaning of this dance is!

Montezuma

Almost the vortex draws me in too.
I would like to lose myself
In the ring, dance before God.
Dazzling splendour is our sun!
Dazzling splendour are the stars!
Turning darkness is the tempest!
Turning darkness is the Godhead
Vomiting rain of hail and lightning!
Glowing beats the earth's wild heart—
Only by the wise it's heard—
Till its crimson blood spurts out
Like a cataract from the snowy
Summits of the holy mountains.
See there Popocatapetl,
How from inaccessible heights
He looks down on our holy feast.
He is dumb; but once he spoke,
And the Heavens gave him answer.
Golden milk flowed from his flanks;
Dizzy rage ringed him about.
Then were manifested wildly
Death and life; and born of anger,
From their pairing rose existence!
Words are but confounded speech.
The cry is sure, the cry is true!

Very joy and very pain.
Howl of rage and cry of rapture—
These release the god within us.

Las Casas

Dreadfully the temple drums
Sounding, thrill through marrow and bone.

Montezuma

What beats there—that is the Godhead.
Through the holy mouths of drums
His ineffable voice is heard.

Marina

[*Is gazing stiff and rigid out into the courtyard, suddenly in horror.*
What is happening there, Las Casas?
Do you not see the Spaniards there?
'Tis as though strife had broken out.

Las Casas

Do not look: 'tis naught, Marina!
Come, for we must close the door.
[*The joyful sounds outside have changed. One hears piercing death-cries.*

Marina

I am dreaming, or but now
Velasquez de Leon struck down
With his dagger, three, four, five,
Of the Caziks, slaughtered them,
Struck them through breast, through back,—ah me!

Las Casas

Close the doors, oh, close the doors!
For to see what's happening here
May well turn us all to stone.

Marina

Whence have they come, all these Spaniards?
See, they fall upon the dancers.
And all fly, cry out in terror,
Seek an outlet. But the door
Bristles thick with Spanish swords.
See there, see there, how they stumble!
Will they not rise up again?
No! And one falls on the other.
O what hills of flesh are here,
And what rivers of men's blood!
And, o'er these, what hellish laughter!
Devils, devils are upon us,
And the destruction of the world!

[*She rushes out madly.* Las Casas *quickly closes the door. One hears now more faintly the cries of the slaughter which is taking place in the courtyard of the temple.* Montezuma *absentmindedly lets his brow rest on his hand.*

Montezuma

What has happened to her, Las Casas?
Do such seizures take her often?

Las Casas

So it seems, lord. Forth from here!

NINTH SCENE

The same room in the Spanish quarters. The door towards the temple courtyard is closed. Before the altar lies Gomara *in prayer. At some distance from him kneels* Marina. *The altar lamp and a few candles give scanty light. Hollow sound of fighting, now from here, now from there, can be heard.*

Bernal Diaz *and* Jeronimo de Aguilar, *dreadfully exhausted, stumble in.*

Bernal Diaz

Water! Water! I must drink.
Faith, I die without a wound!

Jeronimo de Aguilar

When you kill one of those beasts
Other three grow out of him.

Bernal Diaz

God, how comfortably we lived
Here ere Pedro Alvarado
Landed us clean in this wet puddle,
With his slaughter in the temple.
Water!

[Marina *has brought a goblet and hands it to him.*

Marina

Here. How is it out there?

Bernal Diaz

Ah, that's balm! Out there it's bad.
We collected through the day
Forty wagon-loads of arrows.
But still new ones are arriving,
Long sharp lances, heavy stones—
Don't you hear the thundering?
O that day might change to night!
One could still not move about there
Even if from the start we'd fed
A burning fire continually
With the multitudes of the slain.

Jeronimo de Aguilar

Our position's critical;
And it's grown so desperate
Thanks to the cunning of our cunning
Captain, Pedro Alvarado.
Could we not have let those people
Celebrate their dance in peace,
Instead of coldly butchering them
Without pity to the last man?
Can one wonder that our action
Was too much even for those tame
Tractable citizens to bear?

[Velasquez de Leon *stumbles in; his hair filthied with slaughter, his eyes burning, panting for breath.*

Velasquez de Leon

All is quenched now, not our fury
Only, nor our cannibal thirst for blood!
For the animals have set fire
To our breastworks now at last.
Our quarter's burning in two corners.
And if Cortez comes not back now
All is finished with our glorious
Young, new-Spanish empire here.

[*He drinks greedily.*

[Christoval de Guzman *appears in the same state as the others.*

Christoval de Guzman

All is lost. The brigantines are
Burning. We are in the trap.
Our ships, our brigantines, our only
Left resource, go up in flames!

Gomara

Vast and terrible disaster!
Strange and heavy visitation!
Wonderful are the ways of God!
If he send not help even now,
And we fall still living in these
Heathens' hands—then woe to us!

Christoval de Guzman

How so, father? What can happen?
At the most it may befall you
That your proper heart may be
Held still beating before your nose.

But then you will be a martyr,
And the Holy Father will turn you
Posthumously into a saint.

Gomara

Do not jest with solemn things!

Marina

And my fate is also sealed
If Malinche comes not back.

[Las Casas *enters, breathing heavily, covered with sweat and blood.*

Las Casas

Our provisions now are meagre.
When our people went to get them
They found nothing in the store-room
But blank walls and piles of rubbish.
These dark cunning Aztec dogs
Can work magic, it seems to me.

[Martin Lopez *enters.*

Martin Lopez

All my brigantines are burning.
Yea, our haughty brigantines are
Strangely altered—they look like fireworks!
But their splendour's spent in vain,
These three floating and gigantic
Peaks of flame; they will not light us
When day comes. Let us pray now,
For there is no path leads hence
Save into eternity.

Christoval de Guzman

Mark, Don Velasquez de Leon,
This time you have reckoned ill.
You, forsooth, thought to spread terror
By the butchery of those muttons
Outside there in the temple courtyard.
Now you've made them dance in sooth
To some tune before their idols!

Martin Lopez

Terrorise them? Nonsense! 'Tis
Grace before meat we've given them.
By your threats you've made them heroes.
Ay, your bloody deed transformed those
Lambs into a host of tigers.

Velasquez de Leon

'Twas not chosen by me, the plan.
Our good captain, Alvarado,
Is responsible for our plight.

Martin Lopez

Sure our valiant leader Cortez
Slept, when he appointed this
Witless stripling as commander.
Heavy with fruit the error's been;
And we'll pay for it with life.

Las Casas

Friends, what cannot be repaired
It is better to forget,
Lest division might flame up
Here, a foe within our camp.

[PEDRO DE ALVARADO *appears, in wild excitement of battle.*

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

To the walls! Fill up the breach!
They lay ladders against the walls,
And like droves of coal-black panthers
They swarm up in multitudes.

[FATHER OLMEDO *enters. The fighters, except for* ALVARADO *and* LAS CASAS, *have rushed out.*

Father, I come to speak to you.
Have you brought this obstinate savage
To his senses finally?

FATHER OLMEDO

Nothing definite. Montezuma
Makes perpetual declaration
That he's but a poor, dishonoured
Slave without a shred of power.
You, he says, you are the gods.
So then order ye the waves
To subside and cease from rolling.
For you roused them up yourselves.

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

If he's stubborn, there's the rack!

MARTIN LOPEZ

There's the rack, Don Alvarado,
But not for an emperor whom
Cortez has forbidden us
To injure by one hair of his head.

Pedro de Alvarado

Building ships, that is your business,
Martin Lopez! Speak of masts,
Pray you, or of keels or rudders!
But be pleased to hold your peace
When there's talk of other matters
Far without your handiwork!
Like it or leave it, I shall set
This impertinent, stubborn, snivelling
Heathen, whom you call an emperor,
In the breach, and answer for it.
And I'll see that he will either
Order his devils to make a halt,
Or, if not, then I myself will
Strike him down with my own hand.

Las Casas

If in truth you seek salvation
In the word of Montezuma,
And are nothing loth to take
That great benefit from his hands,
Without shame a creditor
For your existence to this man
Whom already we owe much
And have given such evil thanks,—
Then I'll see if I can do
What the father has not managed;
But perhaps still possible.

Pedro de Alvarado

Very well then! I await
This one service from this heathen.
When these devils look on him

Decked up in his motley raiment,
They'll creep to the cross, I warrant.
If he'll say to them, he is
Here of his free will, not fettered,
And commands them to disperse,
They will do it: that is certain.
Yes, the devil, I'm of a mind
To accept our rescue from him—
See no ground why I should not be
Debtor to him for my life.
Rather that than for my death!
And so do the best you can
Yet once more on my account.
If 'tis fruitless, then I'll speak!

[*He goes out hurriedly.*

Las Casas

[*To* Father Olmedo.

Take me to him.

[Las Casas *and* Father Olmedo *go out. One hears the drums of Theocalli.* Gomara *and* Marina *murmur prayers. The sounds of fighting become louder.* Montezuma *appears with* Las Casas *and attended at a distance by three Spanish soldiers, armed to the teeth.* Montezuma *carries in his arms a white rabbit which he continually strokes.*

Las Casas

Lord, you also are in peril
If they overrun this hall
In the fury of the fight.

Therefore, pray you, give command
In your own imperial voice
From the walls that they shall halt.

Montezuma

[*Smiling darkly, lays his ear against the white rabbit.*
I must list to what it says.

Las Casas

Why, what can this creature tell you?
Are you not the mighty ruler
Montezuma? Are you not,
Lord, the true son of the sun?

Montezuma

[*Turns quickly to the crucifix.*
Even as this one?

Las Casas

Whom?

Montezuma

This one here!
For you call him in plain terms
The almighty Son of God.

Las Casas

Like no other is the Saviour
In the greatness of his sorrow.
For he is eternal love,
And the world, eternal hate.

But this much is true: we too
Suffer; you more than us all.

Montezuma

[*Regarding the Crucified.*
If we weighed our pains against thine,
Thine, I fear, would strike the beam.

Gomara

Lord, if you blaspheme, you'll draw
Down on us the wrath of heaven;
For one mocks not at the Saviour
Without making dreadful atonement.

Las Casas

Lord, think only of your people.
Think but of your sacred duty.
Check this mad, insensate slaughter,
And restore again even now
Peace and happiness to your people.
Know, the savage Alvarado
Has taken oath that he will slay you
Ere he gives the fortress up.

Montezuma

[*Smiling darkly, lays his ear against the white rabbit.*
I must list to what it says.

Marina

[*Clasps the king's knees.*
Show thy power, mighty one;
Free us from the power of evil!

Montezuma

I must list to what it says:
'Tis the creature of the abyss.
And its eyes are like two burning
Crater caverns, and its fur
Is the white of mountain snow.
As it hops, so hops the earth,
And the ground quakes, as if the inner
Voice of God were loud upraised.

Las Casas

Lord, I may not hide from you
That Don Pedro Alvarado
Has a heavy and ruthless hand.

Montezuma

[*Takes his place before the altar, always stroking the rabbit.*
Yea, he teaches us. We're children
In the gentle art of murder.

Gomara

My office is an office of peace.
None the less in hours of trial
I have fortitude and courage.
Ah, believe not that we came
To you driven by our hearts' lust!
No; our God did send us here
To bring salvation to the damned
Through the splendour of his grace.
Be baptised; accept the Christ;
Be the first apostle to your

Heathen people lost in darkness,
And corrupt with ignorance:
And until the end of time
You will have the name of saint.
Men will honour here forever
The benefactor of their land,
After he has gone on high,
Dwelling in Heaven with the Father.
But, if you should harden your heart,
And turn aside from Jesus' face,
Then, ah then, the Church will curse you,
Fling you headlong in the abyss,
Where no light may come, and where
There is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Montezuma

[*Always stroking the rabbit, aside to* Las Casas.

He is badly taught, Las Casas.
God's light slumbers in the abyss,
And the roots of Heaven are there!
Ay, this animal could teach him
That the abyss's sun is holy,
Holy and full of darkling wisdom.

Father Olmedo

Lord, your eyes may yet be opened.
God can manifest himself
To you, if he wills, without us.
Yet what boots it, if we perish?
Mighty wisdom came with us,
And with us it will be lost.
We could teach you hidden arts,

Which else you can never know.
And the blessing of our coming—
After this most bloody sowing—
May yet bear unguessed-at blossoms.

Montezuma

Never, never! Curse breeds curse!
Nay, nay, we are lost forever!
Black and dreadful is our fate:
Our God is implacable.
Throned on bones, fresh sacrifice
Still demanding, he's insatiate,
And I am now his beast of sacrifice.
Radiant power of light, all-spreading,
Carried me once away from him:
I was naught but vision and light.
Yet 'twas only for a breathspace—
And my eyes were burned to ashes.
Yet my punishment was earned.
For our holy scriptures warned us
Clearly, without shadow of doubt,
Not of the coming of a god,
But of a Satan, white as death,
Who would come with impudent brows,
And would lie with confident lips,
Saying "I am Quetzalcoatl,
The promised god, the promised saviour."

[*Suddenly exultant shouts are heard from the Spaniards. Two Spanish soldiers rush in.*

First Spanish Soldier

A miracle! A marvel! Cortez!

Second Spanish Soldier

Cortez is beside the bridges,
And three hundred Spaniards with him!
[*The soldiers vanish.*

Las Casas

Hark, how still! What can it be?
Have the waters swallowed all?

Marina

Cortez!

[*She rushes out.*

Gomara

Learn to know the finger
Of the true God, who forsakes not
The temple of them that trust in him!
[*He speaks triumphantly, deeply moved, and sinks down upon the form in prayer.*
[Bernal Diaz *appears laughing and exhausted. He sinks thankfully on a chair, and reflectively stretches all his limbs.*

Bernal Diaz

Ferdinando Cortez' name
Is an army in itself.
We remarked the savages
Fought more languidly, not with the
Same indifference to death
That they've shown through all these days.
As, upon the ocean, squalls
Come more seldom and grow weaker,

So it seemed, the squalls of battle
Came more seldom and grew weaker.
Suddenly streamed the kindly sun
Of care-free joy on us again,
As if never it had been
Darkened in a mortal mid-night
By perpetual deadly hail
Carrying stones and spears and arrows.
Streets and bridges and flat-roofs
Lie deserted by the living.
Only the dead still hold their posts,
And the insects which devour them.
We could not make head or tail,
Till a spy whom we had posted
On the roof saw standards fluttering,
Scarlet cross upon black samite,
Which we all know like our hand.
It was Cortez! And the savages
Saw him earlier still than we.

Montezuma

[*Stands up, looks dumbly around, and faints.*

Las Casas

Lead him forth, and call the surgeon.
"I demand him from you again
Safe and sound, without a scratch,"
These were Ferdinando Cortez'
Final words when he departed.

[Montezuma *is led out by the soldiers set aside to guard him and by his Aztec attendance. The Spanish officers and men of rank now begin to gather, fresh from*

the fighting. They await eagerly the arrival of Cortez. *They are:* Jeronimo de Aguilar, Christoval de Guzman, Velasquez de Leon, Martin Lopez *and others. Finally comes* Pedro de Alvarado, *at his side* Cortez' *marshall* Sandoval, *who has returned with* Cortez' *army.*

Sandoval

[*To* Alvarado.

Nay, he will not speak to you now.
Here you'll give him your account,
Here with your brother officers.
He'll arrive now any moment.

Pedro de Alvarado

Yes, and while I wait Marina
Crams his ears full of her lies!
Or, at least, her fantasies.

All

Cortez!

[Cortez *appears with his staff, a mere few.*

Cortez

Comrades all, my greeting!
Narvaez now is in my hands.
We've command o'er all his ships,
And his men do homage to me
As the rightful governor
Of this new, this great new-Spanish
Province of our emperor.

All

[*In an exultant shout.*

Spain! For Spain and for Saint James!

Cortez

Father, your hand! and yours, Gomara!
Christoval, yours! Yours, Martin Lopez!
Bernal Diaz, your hand here!
You have suffered much, my children,
While I, away in Vera Cruz,
Brought order not without much toil.
But the coast is quiet at last.
You, Las Casas, your hand too!
Valiantly you've borne yourself.

Pedro de Alvarado

[*Who has been deliberately overlooked by* Cortez.

Herewith now I lay the command
Once more back into your hands.

Cortez

[*Sharply and clearly.*

And high time too that it happened:
You were unworthy to possess it.
You have betrayed my trust in you.
Who gave order for this slaughter
During the peaceful temple dances,
Was no man of steady mind,
But naught better than a madman!

TENTH SCENE

In the Spaniards' quarters. The room in which MONTEZUMA *lives, especially furnished for him. A small Roman Catholic altar has also been set here.* MONTEZUMA *lies on a hard couch. At the exits stand men of the Spanish Guard, armed to the teeth. From outside comes faintly the noise of fighting.*

FIRST SOLDIER

These wild animals run again
Raging furiously against our walls,
As they did before our Cortez
Came back: 'tis an evil sign.
Our affairs are going badly;
Our position is perilous.

SECOND SOLDIER

Rather say 'tis hopeless, brother.

FIRST SOLDIER

I have very little to lose
If I perish; there is no one
In this miserable world
Who will lose aught if I'm lost.

Who my father was I know not,
And my mother died and left me
When I was scarce ten years old,
Left me on Cordova's streets,
Ragged, vagabond and untaught.
Since that I've been on the roads,
Trudging, with boots and with none,
Many a thousand Spanish league.
And to-day I stand here, hardly
Knowing how in truth I came here,
And keep guard upon this savage,
And perchance by to-morrow's light
These brown knaves will eat me up.
Satan knows, how things will go!
Stuffed full to the very rafters
Is this house with costly booty.
For my paltry share falls only
Thirteen pesos, when all's said,
Of this barefaced robbery:
Gold enough to drink and brawl
Through one night in Granada.
Yet—for such is man—I would
Gladly pay these thirteen pesos—
Do not laugh, friend!—at this moment
For a grave on Spanish earth.

Second Soldier

If we even had some fighting!
That, at least, keeps your blood warm.
But to walk here back and forward
Saying nothing,—'tis a torment.
In Valencia dwells my sweetheart.
But why should I think of her,
Seeing she's in far Valencia?

[SANDOVAL *enters with a very serious face. The guard stand at attention.*

SANDOVAL

Can you be depended on?

FIRST SOLDIER

Yea, in very truth, your grace.

SECOND SOLDIER

Without flinching, to the death.

SANDOVAL

O, I knew it, ere I asked you,
For I know you are two gallant,
Honourable, dependable,
And heroic Spanish soldiers.
Our affairs are critical.
We may have yet to retreat.—
If the enemy drives us back,
And you hear the Spanish bugles
Sounding the signal for retreat,
Then you have to make short work
Of that savage who slumbers there.
When that's done, fight your way through
And rejoin your company.

FIRST SOLDIER

'Twill be done, fear not, your grace.

SECOND SOLDIER

We have understood you well.
It's already as good as done.

Sandoval

Very well. The measure is
A decision of the council,
And it is Fernando Cortez,
He himself, who gives the order.—
He sleeps mostly?

First Soldier

Yea, your grace.
But it seems to us he's fevered.

Sandoval

Cover him up. Have you not mantles?

First Soldier

Yes, but he throws them off again.

Sandoval

Does he take the food you give him?

First Soldier

No. First now when he awakened,
Sparing he drank a little water,
Which he steadily refuses.

Second Soldier

And, your highness, while he did it
He was not quite in his mind.
With clear senses, by Saint James,

He would not have deigned to do it.
And, I'll never see Heaven's gates,
If the purpose of this savage
Is not to compass his death
Sinfully through thirst and hunger.

Sandoval

Trust the cunning of a savage!
His clandestine ways are legion,
His chief art's dissimulation.
He malingers fever and madness
To get round more certainly
Our commander's plain request
To pipe off his pack of hounds.

[Velasquez de Leon *enters, followed by two Spanish soldiers who lead in* Guatemotzin, *fettered.* Guatemotzin *is gloomy and despondent. After these,* Marina.

Velasquez de Leon

[*To* Sandoval.

You're well met here, Sandoval.
I have orders to lead out
This crass savage to the roof.
The order's not "alive or dead,"
But, well, either walking or lying.

Sandoval

Don Velasquez, that will be
Hard to do. How thinks the general
That you will succeed in doing

What Las Casas and Olmedo
And even Cortez could not do?

Velasquez de Leon

We have chanced upon a means.
Guatemotzin here will try to
Change the tune his father sings.
If he fails, then he's been told
That at most he's twenty paces
Still to go as a living man—
Through the yard to execution.

Sandoval

Stripling, hast thou marked this well?

Velasquez de Leon

O, he knows it! But Marina
Shall once more repeat it to him,
That he might not gull himself,
Spanish words are empty wind.

[*He goes over to the couch where* Montezuma *lies, and shakes him roughly.*

Up! Now's not the time for snoring!
No buffoonery! No tricks here!
These are but knave's artifices.
And the devil take my soul
If I do not make thy limbs
Suppler with a little compulsion.

Montezuma

[*Half unconscious, is brought to a sitting position, and sees his son.*

Guatemotzin!

Velasquez de Leon

Now, that's better!
Already half come to thy senses!
Now give us the other half
And thou'lt be a complete—savage.
Thou wilt speak a little while—
But not long!—here with thy son.
Then thou'lt please to call the rabble
Of wild beasts who howl around us
With one word from off our shoulders.
[*He turns to* Guatemotzin.
Otherwise thou hast short shrift!

Guatemotzin

Now, leave us alone, Marina.

[Marina *whispers with* Velasquez *and* Sandoval, *after which all the Spaniards leave the room.*

Guatemotzin

[*Fettered as he is, sinks on his knees before the king: with trembling and shaken voice.*

Think not, my beloved ruler,
And my more beloved father,
That I sink myself so low
As to recognise the command
Of these savages, and bid thee
To do aught to save my life.
Thou wilt not exorcise the tempest
Set in motion by our land's
Ancient gods; thou wilt not still
The mighty wave of insurrection

Whose great flames at last, at last,
Roar around this vipers' nest!
Now that I can hear its roar
I die smiling. And I know, too,
Now why all the land's best flower,
Cut to pieces, had to fall
In the May Moon's offering feast.
From that bloody seed sprang up
Warriors, heroes and avengers,
And the death-despising, fiery
Spirit of our fatherland!
So I take my leave now, father,
And I go out now from thee
To my death and my Moon-Mother.
And the words which I speak now
Are the ultimate darkling stairs
To the gate which leads me forth
From the prison-house of life.
Great and free died Qualpopoca!
When the flames leapt round him, he
Stood, an image cut in copper;
And there sounded from his lips,
Pure, austere, unfaltering,
An old, sacred, magical
Temple song sweet with the honour
Of the Mother of our gods.
Father, shelter thou my wives,
Shelter my beloved children,
And keep pure among our people
The remembrance of my death.
For I die, as I have lived,
For the folk of my own blood,
And the land of Tenochtitlan.

[*Kneeling,* GUATEMOTZIN *has crept nearer his father. Deeply moved they gaze at*

each other. Finally Montezuma *falls weeping on his son's neck.* Guatemotzin, *too, is weeping.*

Montezuma

[*After both have wept for a time.*
Much my folk have to forgive me,
For I was a poor blind leader!
Now at last that I can see
I see naught around but death!—
But say thou, thyself, my son,
Was the trial not too heavy,
And too dreadful the temptation
Which the God laid in our way?
Why, why did he lend these devils
His unsullied form of light,
Letting them betray his people
Who with countless offerings
Showed their faith more strong than death,
Waiting on the great redemption?
Why deceit, hellish deception,
Instead of his sure and promised grace?
When the heavens show miracles
Who are we that we should not
Honour them in sacred wonder?
Yea, still more, who are they, these
Radiant Aztecs here, and these
White ones, truly born of light?
Supermen they seem, most like
Gods sublime in lineament,
Mighty in mysterious magic!
Whom the Eternal dowered so
Who would dare presume to think
That 'twas all deceit, death-dealing,—

Demons in the shape of men,
Full of lust and evil within,
Without heart and without soul?

Velasquez de Leon

[*Glances in, harshly.*

Are you ready? Are you agreed?

Guatemotzin

Yes, agreed! But not yet ready.

Velasquez de Leon

Then make haste, you understand?
Outside stand three blunderbusses
Loaded with the lead of death.
For thy heart they are reserved
If thou comest with empty hands.
Be quick, be quick, and make an end.

[*He retires.*

Guatemotzin

Now farewell! Thou see'st, they take
From life's last and tiniest
Residue of pearls remaining,
Inexorable pearl by pearl.
Then farewell. And my lips' final
Prayer, my dear, beloved father,
Will be this: may'st thou rule long
Over thy liberated people,
Partaking of the ancient gods'
Richer and more blessed favour.

[Marina *enters, carrying in her arms the*

vestments of the Aztec kings: a feather crown richly set with diamonds, a white and blue robe covered with emeralds and other green stones, shoes adorned with gold.

What would'st thou with these sacred things?

Marina

I would clothe my emperor
In the fine robes of the ruler.

Guatemotzin

What say'st thou? Thy emperor?
Thou apostate against thy people!

Marina

I am faithful, not apostate.
Once, too, had the king belief.
But, what's more: I have it still!

Montezuma

O, thou soul of him who has none,
Poisonous tool of villainy,
These fine robes are no more holy
Since thou soiled them, wanton she-fox,
With thy filthy, lustful talons.
Go!

Guatemotzin

And may the vulture soon
Glut himself upon thy carcase!

Marina

[*Shaken, urgently, almost inarticulate with weeping.*

Save yourselves! Above you both
Death hangs even now: I know it!
Not thee only, Guatemotzin,
But you, too, exalted lord,
If you hesitate yet longer
And appear not, and command
Peace with your own mighty voice,
Wearing your imperial robes.

Guatemotzin

Never, father, thou'lt do that!

Montezuma

I need no admonishment.
I was never, my son, a coward,
Nor an emperor in seeming.
Fear not, for I was resolved
Ere thou cam'st. And what she says
The sacred bird Ti-hui-tochan
Told me lately in a dream.
I must perish, even as thou;
And I would: I am at the goal.
Louder it speaks, ever louder,
My heart's heavy, boding pulse.
Yea, it groans like heavy hammers
Grinding on the obdurate iron,
Louder speaking, ever louder.
And such speech, spoken in such ways,
Is a tongue which can't betray.
My good brother Cuitlahuao

Will rule the kingdom after me.
Now let us hold silence, since
The decree of fate stands there,
Inexorable in the stars.

Guatemotzin

What decree?

Montezuma

Question no further!

[Cortez *enters, attended by* Velasquez de Leon *and* Jeronimo de Aguilar. *Behind them the guard.*

Velasquez de Leon

You were agreed but still not ready
When I questioned you before.
Are you both now? Answer quickly!

Guatemotzin

Yea, we are!

Velasquez de Leon

And in what sense?

Guatemotzin

Lead me out to speedy death!

Cortez

[*At whom* Velasquez de Leon *looks questioningly, awaiting instructions.*
Do him the favour, and be quick.

[GUATEMOTZIN *is led away by the guard.*
Now tell him, too, what his fate is.

JERONIMO DE AGUILAR

[*To* MONTEZUMA.
Thou shalt never leave this prison
Save in the high robes of thy office—
And to bid thy people pause
Who shamelessly attack their guests—
Or with the halter of the hangman
Round thy neck.

MONTEZUMA

[*Quickly slips a golden noose round his neck.*
Strangle me, then!
[CORTEZ *makes a sign. All the Spaniards leave the room;* MARINA, *too, but without the vestments of the emperor, which remain behind.*

CORTEZ

See, I come myself, my friend.

MONTEZUMA

Yea, to darken the world for me?

CORTEZ

As for that, it lies with thee!

MONTEZUMA

Comest to martyr me, to rack me?

Cortez

Not with my will! Yet if thou art
Obstinate, I can't withstand them,
If my soldiers in their fury
Give thee over to the rack.

Montezuma

Set against thy presence here
Seems the rack almost a kindness.

Cortez

Take thy pleasure of this kindness
Then, where neither guile nor wisdom,
Nor repentance will avail thee!
Mark, plebeian rascals dare to
Rise against thy kingly sceptre,
And puffed-up they set at naught
Thy imperial command.
More, they rise against thy guests,
Embassy of the almighty
World-subduer, Charles the Fifth,
Whose design is all for peace.
And to carry thee the loving
Christian king's good-will and grace
Have we not, through countless perils,
Found thee at last here, after travelling
From the other end of the earth?
And what now is our reward?

Montezuma

As the deed, so's the reward!

Cortez

We, too, have such sayings as these,
And they hold, no doubt, much wisdom;
But not in the mouths of fools!
And thou art a fool, my friend!
How, then, will this treason help thee
Against the vengeance of my king,
Whose sceptre rules a hundredfold as
Many men as thine—and all
Weaponed with lightning and with thunder?
Yea, for one man that thou slayest
He will send a thousand more
To exterminate thy seed
From the land in pitiless vengeance
To be remembered for all time.

Montezuma

No one doubts all this, Malinche.

Cortez

And thou would'st, knowing this clearly,
Nevertheless not check this treason?

Montezuma

Treason?

Cortez

Yea, contemptible
Impudent treason, such it is!

Montezuma

Perpetrated by thee, Malinche?

Cortez

All that which I did, was done
For thy land's good and for thine.

Montezuma

When thou gav'st me over in thy
Servants' savage, brutal hands,
And let chains be fettered on me,
Was that for the kingdom's good?
Was it, in sooth, for my own good?

Cortez

Yea, it was! And once more, yea!
Without haven in our quarter
Long since had the general rising
Washed thee away along with it.
Now thy brother Cuitlahuao
Is proclaimed as emperor.
And thine own son, Guatemotzin,
Was among the heads of treason,
And betrayed, himself, his father.

Montezuma

He did well! And now, enough.
All thy gratitude, thy thanks,
All thy inexpungible
Debt for all my boundless, loving
Grace will be annulled at once,
If thou'lt lease me of thy loathsome
Presence, and I see thee not.

Cortez

Stubborn beast! Learn then to know
What a stronger will can do!

[*He strikes on the floor several times with his sword. Six Spanish soldiers enter.*

Do what you have been commanded.

[Cortez *goes out quickly.*

First Soldier

Who begins? Who gives the lead?

Second Soldier

Perhaps, then, we're his courtiers?
Will you wait, till he commands you?

Third Soldier

Lay the rubbish there. Then hurry!
Every instant now is precious,
For, as I will reach salvation,
I can hear the beginning of
Yet another howling onslaught.

[*There is heard the roar of a new attack by the besieging party.*

Fourth Soldier

[*To* Montezuma.

Strip thyself, my son of the sun!

Second Soldier

He knows not a word of Spanish.
If he did, he'd feign: I know him!
Heigh, the rascal makes no motion.
One, two, three! See, that's the way!

[*He tears the clothes off* Montezuma.

First Soldier

Hold him fast, behind there, someone!
Or he'll tumble on his back, or
Knock his head against the wall.

Fifth Soldier

Easy! Steady! Now he stands.
Nothing like our Spanish drill!
[*Three of the soldiers have raised* Montezuma *from behind and hold him rigid in their arms.*
Now, he's standing. Put his rags on.

Third Soldier

Holds the robe up.
Murder and pest, but it is dainty!
See how thick the precious stones are!
If each of us filched but one
There would still be more than plenty.

Sixth Soldier

[*While the others break precious stones off.*
What the devil, give me one, too!

First Soldier

Well, they're not much use, for if this
Dog does not save us, then to-morrow,
With or without our precious stones,
We'll be only six dead Spaniards.
So let's make this king of cards
Ready without more delay.

Third Soldier

[*Tries to put the vestments on the king.*
No; that's not the way.
[*To the king.*
Good knave
Art thou feigning clumsiness
To annoy thy courtiers, eh?
Reasonable now! Be guided!
Or thou'lt get a cannon ball
In the middle of thy cannibal
Precious physiognomy.

Montezuma

Wherefore dost not strike me harder?
Strike me! Strike me dead, my friend!

Sixth Soldier

[*Strikes him on the head from behind with a strap.*
Good! Then take that and be thankful!
I would give thee thy last pains
If I had my will of it.
Guess who it was that struck thee, savage!

Third Soldier

[*Sets the Mexican crown on his own head.*
Say, how does this crown become me,
This good crown of Tenochtitlan?
[*Wild laughter from the Spaniards.*

Fifth Soldier

Clap it on his head, thou rascal!
For, by God, time flies! time flies!

First Soldier

Heave him up! Nay, set him down!
Heigh, this puppet is not heavy!
Now, seeing I'm his chambermaid,
I must pull these gold shoes on.

Third Soldier

Hast thou all thy fal-de-rals,
Now at last, my king of cards?

Montezuma

Thou art wrong. A true king stands
Here before a genuine servant.

First Soldier

[*Gives* Montezuma *a box on the ear.*
How, thou infidel hound, thou darest
To be arrogant past measure
To good Spaniards and good Christians!
Thou moth-eaten blackamoor
From the pawn-shops of Barcelona!

Second Soldier

[*Bowing ironically.*
Your majesty's obedient servant.
Comrades, in the dust with you!
Not for reverence, nay, for laughter
Over those who stand and tremble
At this scarecrow of a king.

Fifth Soldier

Let me kneel on my left knee, that
So I might kiss thy garment's hem.

O, be gracious, prince and lord!

[*He blows his nose in the hem of the imperial robe, amid general laughter. Then he springs up, seizes* MONTEZUMA, *and drags him forward.*

To the parapet with him!

[*The emperor is dragged out by the shouting soldiers.*

ELEVENTH SCENE

Room in the Spanish quarter whose door leads on to the terrace from which one overlooks the courtyard of the temple and the temple itself. To the right the Roman Catholic altar is still there. CORTEZ, *attended by* ALVARADO, *enters quickly.*

CORTEZ

In two words, it has miscarried,
And we hold our strongest, yea,
Our one remaining stay no more.

PEDRO DE ALVARADO

Yet the place is quiet now.
Not one enemy is in sight
At this moment near our quarter.

[JERONIMO DE AGUILAR *enters.*

CORTEZ

Well, Jeronimo, what say'st thou
Who know this folk as no one else?

JERONIMO DE AGUILAR

General, this very night
We must either leave the city
Or—'tis the only choice—the world.

Cortez

Short and to the point! Thy grounds?

Jeronimo de Aguilar

Our last hope betrays us now.
That 'tis so, who will deny?
Seeing the emperor is wounded,
And seeing 'tis the slings and arrows
Of his folk have done it, who
Is so asinine to believe still
That, forsooth, on his account
They will save us from destruction?

Cortez

Then, in your opinion what
Is the meaning of this stillness?

Jeronimo de Aguilar

It's the lull before the storm,
And before a storm, too, general,
Such as we have never felt
Since we ventured here at first!
When the emperor in his robes
Stood there on the flat-roofs' edge,
Guarded by our vigilant soldiers,
And was visible to the people,
I believed almost a breathspace,
That the monarch's sacred presence,
After all, would be our saving.
Then befell the dreadful thing!

Cortez

If he only had not spoken!
While he spoke the turning-point came.

Jeronimo de Aguilar

Not his silence, but his words,
It is true, first sealed his fate!
And ours also, as I fear.
And we brought this on ourselves
When we screwed him to the point,
Part by threats, part by entreaty.

Cortez

Yes and no, Jeronimo.
With no hope that he would speak
Did I use all means thereto.
Yea, I stood in apprehension
When at last his heart, long silent,
Loosed itself in sudden words there.
But that was not of our doing;
He obeyed there not our will.
No, it was his people's faces,
And the lull of expectation
Which fell dead upon them all,
That, against the emperor's will,
Moved him to impassioned speech.

Jeronimo de Aguilar

And then arrows flew, and spears,
And with bloody temples fell
Montezuma, heavily stricken;

Fell down there, as I believe,
Nevermore to rise again.

Pedro de Alvarado

[*To* Jeronimo de Aguilar.

Yes, but when the emperor fell
Saw you not the fear that came
Blindly over all the Aztecs?
Saw you not them throw their arms
Shrieking away and run in haste
All confused away; so that now
There's no enemy to be seen?
I am of good heart and think still
That we're rid of these brown dogs
Now, if not forever, then
Well, at least, for a long time.

Jeronimo de Aguilar

We'll be rid of them for long,
By your leave, Don Alvarado,
If they're rid of us for long.
But, or long or short, remains
That our ship has broken loose,
And no anchor holds here longer,
In this treacherous, bottomless ground.

Cortez

Yea, 'tis so. You speak the truth.
Why should we hide from ourselves
That we are a beaten army?
Had Narvaez not come this way,
Or had you but used discretion
When, alas, I was away;

Had our dusky hosts not been
Goaded on to desperation
By that unforeseen, untimely,
And most infamous massacre
In the courtyard of the temple,—
Well then, needed we not now
Leave our hardly gotten booty
Here in pledge, nor needed we
Go away mid shame and jeering.
"Had I not" and "if" and "but,"
These, however, are but poor food.
Call my men together now,
And await me in the courtyard,
Where I'll give you such command
As I must needs, for retreat.

[BERNAL DIAZ *enters hurriedly.*

BERNAL DIAZ

We have missed six of our comrades,
And we think they have been captured.
One is Christoval de Guzman.

[*The heavy sound of the temple drums is heard.*

CORTEZ

Well, the temple drums inform us
What fate is reserved for them.
But where naught helps more, what boots it
To give way to thoughts of horror,
And lame ourselves with grief and pity?
We have need now of our utmost
Strength, all that we have to give,
If we're still to save the little
That may still perhaps be saved.

Now, leave me alone, my comrades,
That I may reflect in peace,
And see clearly what's demanded
By our new and heavy task.

[Pedro de Alvarado, Jeronimo de Aguilar *and* Bernal Diaz *go out.* Cortez *stands up, gazes darkly and fixedly before him; his lips begin to tremble. At last he sinks in still and ardent prayer before the altar, his eyes fixed on the crucifix. The drums of the temple sound more heavily.* Montezuma, *severely wounded, is carried in. A surgeon and* Marina *are with him. Not far from the closed door to the terrace the litter with the dying man is set down. All this is done very quietly so that* Cortez, *sunk in prayer, does not hear it. Helped by* Marina *the surgeon binds the sufferer's wounds.* Gomara *and* Father Olmedo *appear a little later.*

Gomara

Will he die?

The Surgeon

Yea, your highness.
Wounds like these no skill can close.
And I know no other man
For whom I wish so heartily
That he may find peace, as this one.

Gomara

Yea, but peace he'll hardly find
If he perishes in his sins!

And he is still unconverted.
What say you, have you power still
To awaken him to his state?
Or is there no hope more left?

The Surgeon

'Tis hardly possible to hope.

Gomara

Has your art no more resources
To call back to fleeting life,
Even if 'tis but for a moment,
One who has gone so far as this?

The Surgeon

Yes, our art has such resources.
But one might well hesitate
To prolong without good reason
His last heavy, suffering hours.

Gomara

Think, my friend, what is in question?
Whether a man caught in his sins
Should be meted out damnation,
And asleep go down to hell,
Or, awakened, enter the golden
Gates to everlasting bliss!
Shall you let him slumber, then,
Or awake him to salvation?

The Surgeon

If 'tis so, in sooth, then truly . . .

Gomara

I say't in good faith. I feel
Heavily burdened in my conscience,
Yea, I am tortured with the thought,
That we have not brought salvation
To this soul, to this one soul.

Father Olmedo

And my heart speaks even as yours.
On the Day of Judgment God
Will demand this soul of us;
This one chiefly, who on earth
Walked so lonely and so alien.
How much friendship, how much love
He showed towards us when we came!
And what pain and disappointment
We were called by fate, alas,
To prepare for him to endure!
Shall this be forever in vain?
Shall the nameless, countless sorrows
Of this poor, much-suffering creature
Never be washed away by grace?
Then has our painful mission here
Not been with the blessing of God;
And we have to ask ourselves,
Who have spread here such destruction,
Whether we have not gone astray
From the true way of our Saviour.

Cortez

[*Stands up suddenly, very pale, with his distorted face turned to the litter where* Montezuma *lies.*

Wake him, man, if you can do it!
Do it! Otherwise your art is
Worthless! Have you understood?
Act, wherefore are you a physician?
Every weak breath makes me tremble
Lest, before he has partaken
Of the grace of Jesus Christ,
He should die in lightless gloom.
You speak truly, worthy fathers,
And I am of your opinion;
'Tis just this man we must save
For eternal blessedness.

The Surgeon

[*Loud in the king's ear.*

Lord, awake! Come to yourself!
You have great things to be told!
A great destiny to be met!
And the minutes of your being,
The few minutes you've still left,
Ask you to call up your forces.

Marina

See, my lords, his eyes are opening!

Montezuma

[*Feverishly, fitfully, hastily,*

Hasten, hasten! On the flat-roof
Stands the Emperor Montezuma,
He who is the son of the sun,
And the suffering, many-wounded
Messenger of the weeping stars!
Hasten, hasten, for the sun-born

Saviour is speaking to the people!
And he brings them free redemption
From all evils and all devils,
And the horror of this world!

Father Olmedo

O, what marvel's this, what riddle!
His words shake me like a tempest
Vehemently! How near is this
Night of madness to the light!

Gomara

[*Holds the crucifix over the face of* Montezuma.

Hear thou! Thou art near the light!
Hear thou, emperor Montezuma!
Hear'st thou? Hear'st thou? O receive it,
The salvation thou hast prayed for!
In this final hour receive it,
And thou wilt before the day's done
Be with the blest in Paradise.

Montezuma

[*As before.*

Whither floats the world? Where are you,
Cacamatzin, Guatemotzin?
Ah, how Qualpopoca burns;
Fire and flames o'er everything!
Whither waver all my gardens,
My pleasure-houses, palaces?
Why have all my best friends vanished
When I fain would hold them to me?

Cortez

Friends are here around thee now.
Waken, friend, and look about thee.

Montezuma

Thou say'st truth. I was deceived.
For the emperor Montezuma
Floats upon a golden bark
Over the ocean of the world.
And behind in golden barks
I can see his seven queens,
And his brave sons, and his daughters,
And his princes and his warriors,
And his hunters, and his priests,
And his God-created people.
O, how beautiful is this king!
O, how mighty is this emperor!
O, how glorious, O, how godlike,
O, how blessed,—and again
How ineffably rich in pain!

Cortez

[*Strikes his temples with his fists.*
O, I cannot bear this more,
For he makes me like a woman!
Let him die so! Let him be!

Father Olmedo

God must hear our supplication,
And we ask a miracle!
Show thy power, Lord, and strike
This poor spirit with thy beam,
That he may see as Paul did see!

The Surgeon

Do you know us? He awakens!

Cortez

Knowest thou me? I am Malinche.
Friend, I would not leave thy land
Without reconciliation,
And the last grasp of thy hand.

Montezuma

Are the brigantines all ready,
Thy omnipotent winged ships?
Speak, Malinche!

Cortez

All my ships
Have gone up again in flames.

Montezuma

How? In flames? What's this, Malinche?
And who are you all who are here?

Cortez

Friends!

Montezuma

I do not understand.

Cortez

Friends of thine; and thy deep debtors
Whom thou did'st attempt just now
To save at peril of thy life.

MONTEZUMA

[With a sigh which seems as if it would never end.

What a hill of tribulation
Rolls upon my dying breast!

[After a moment of quiet he tries violently to rise up. Foaming at the mouth.

Robbing fiends! Exterminate
The unclean vermin from the earth!
Poison their ways! Dig pits before them!
Catch them in traps! Lay gins for them!
Steal upon them when they're sleeping!
Murder, murder without pity
This white brood who desecrate
The bosom of our mother earth
With filth and abomination!
Off with the bonds here! Leave me! Leave me!

[He tears all the bandages off.

A WINTER BALLAD

A DRAMATIC POEM

PERSONS

Pastor Arne.
His Wife.
Pastor Arnesohn.
Berghild, *his daughter.*
Torarin, *Fish-dealer.*
Kathrin, *his sister.*
Elsalil, *their niece.*
Sir Archie.
Sir Douglas.
Sir Donald.
Captain Frederik.
Sheriff of Bohus.
Farmer from Branehoek.
Anne, *his daughter.*
Olof, Arne's *serving-man.*
A Maid at Arne's.
Assistant Clergyman.
Scottish Mercenaries.

"Herr Arne's Treasure," the beautiful tale by Selma Lagerlöf, impelled the writing of this poem.

FIRST SCENE

A lonely Swedish farmyard deep in snow. On the right the small living-house, on the left a barn whose double doors are shut. It is night, moonlight, a sky full of stars.

The FARMER, *with a lantern, and* CAPTAIN FREDERIK *come out of the living-house door. From all sides dogs are howling in the distance.*

FREDERIK

What's to be done? It is a desperate strait.

FARMER

In Bohus there would be a midwife.

FREDERIK

Bohus
is more than four miles off. No. I must back.
I'll rather send a mate of mine to Marstrand.

FARMER

Perhaps thou'lt find upon thy homecoming
that all is over happily, and thy wife
already holds thy first son in her arms.

FREDERIK

May be. It is a good thing in a way

my galley sits so steady in the ice.
A childbed, and on the high seas, God help me.

Farmer

Thy cargo is for Scotland?

Frederik

Ay, for Leith.
I should have been long back again in Marstrand
with the return freight; but this year the winter,
it seems, will never slacken.—What is that?

Farmer

The fjord. The sea roars underneath the ice.

Frederik

Still.

Farmer

Oh, the dogs thou meanest, Frederik.
The full moon does that: it upsets the beasts.

Frederik

Did not my very breath freeze on my beard,
I'd say a gnat was buzzing in my ear.
Farewell.

Farmer

Farewell.

Frederik

How it hisses! Hear'st thou not?

Farmer

No! But who comes here in the yard so late?
[*The fish-dealer* Torarin *appears, himself pulling his laden hand-sledge.*

Torarin

A friend. Fish! Fish! I bring you fresh sea-fish.
Buy sea-fish from the fish-dealer Torarin!
May is at our doors, and yet it is so cold.

Farmer

Thou venturest out of cover, Torarin?

Torarin

That do I. Only think what day it is.

Farmer

St. Peter the martyr, the seventeenth after Easter.

Torarin

And more, 'tis pastor Arne's ninetieth birthday.

Farmer

Thou'rt right. There is much talk about it. Ay.
Thou'lt spend the night with us?

Torarin

No, I must on.
Haddock and salmon are for pastor Arne.
For fifteen years I have not slept this night
in any other place but the parsonage.

Frederik

If we had such a fat time as the parsons
we should not need to fight with wind and weather,
or toss about upon the angry seas.

Torarin

Still! Do you hear that?

Frederik

I've heard it long. What is it?

Torarin

Something is hissing.

Farmer

Geese in the goose-pen.

Torarin

Nonsense! If I were asked, I'd say it was
the ancient serpent hissing in Paradise.

Farmer

And how does Marstrand look?

Torarin

The streets are thronged
with soldiers, Scottish mercenaries, whom
King Johann has paid off. If they keep sober
it may go well. Debauch and cards and drink
string many up, bringing them to the gallows.

Frederik

But yesterday some swarmed around my ship
asking what chance there was to sail for Scotland.

Torarin

If the ice does not break soon, so that the sea
can take them off, the last coin of their pay
will lie in Marstrand in the harbour inns.
But s-s-s! What is it that is hissing?

Farmer

You mean the scissor-grinders in the barn?

Torarin

You've scissor-grinders here?

Farmer

Ay, three of them!

Torarin

What next will you not have in the farmyard!

[Anne, *the farmer's daughter, comes out of the door.*

Anne

A good evening, father Torarin.

Torarin

Many thanks.
And may God guard and keep you, maiden Anne.
But what's this with the grinders; have you here
blunted so many pairs of shears, my lass?

Anne

They're grinding knives, they rose as from the earth:
stay for a while with us till they are gone.

Torarin

One has one's own thoughts. 'Tis an evil time.
Until the corn comes up Satan is mighty.
Werewolves are running round. The sun is standing
in the house of the Bull, oppressed by bloody Saturn.
My niece is coughing blood. You know, she has a free place in the parsonage. I must look to her.
And there's a festival there: all Bohus parish
will come afoot to-morrow.—God be with us!

[*The double doors of the barn are pushed open from within. On the threshing floor a candle stump can be seen standing on the whetstone.* Sir Archie, Sir Douglas *and* Sir Donald *come out of the barn with long knives. They are three long vagabonds with sooty faces. They are over-excited with drink and hardships, and their behaviour is wild and uncanny.*

Sir Archie

The devil take me! Hot! My gullet's burning, my mouth is full of gall. Ho, bring me something to drink! Are any folk here? Landlord, ho!
Are you the house-folk there? We want to drink.

Where's brandy? else, by God, I will eat snow!
You see, I eat snow!—
[*he crouches down and does so.*
God ha' mercy on me.

Sir Douglas

Give me a rag of cloth, Sir Archie, or
your handkerchief, for I am bleeding like
a pig! The cur, Sir Donald, has cut me
in the hand. The black plague seize upon thee,
Sir Donald! May'st thou find a merciless judge
for every throat cut, every weasand slit!
Are you servants of the house, good people? Look,
thou see'st, the snow's dyed black. I'm killing hens.
Bring me a bandage of old linen. Quick.

Sir Donald

[*coming with three long knives in his hands.*
Open your mouths, good people! How does one
get something here for money or good words
to wet one's whistle? For well-wetted whistles
are always merry. That is why we sing.
We sing because we drink; and vice versa,
we have to drink to keep on singing. Hell
and the hangman, everything swims before my eyes.
Now is it hot or cold? Is it night or day?
Are we in Scotland or in Sweden? Ho,
Sir Archie, what's the time? What hour is it . . .
geographically?

Sir Douglas

Bring the lantern here
from the barn, for by heaven, I can see
faces no clearer now than when I stood
at the grindstone. Is God himself perhaps
a knifegrinder, and is the world his grindstone?
Well then, henceforth no cute astronomer
should break his head. Twist me upon the wheel
if all the stars are not fire-sparks thrown off
from steel and stone in the darkness. The Lord
help me!
My brain is frozen, my fingers blue with cold.
A bleeding knifegrinder, an astronomer
on the cross, on the grindstone, here on the step of
the inn,
beseeches grace, the vinegared sponge, and linen
that he may bind his finger.
[*to the daughter.*
Holy virgin,
take pity on my suffering mother's son.

Anne

Here is my handkerchief. See, take it. Here.

Sir Douglas

The devil knows we're villains; and these people
are lambs. Yea, all the people of this country
are brave as muttons. Selah. Yet, what would
you?
The butcher has his occupation; no man
lives on beans only. If there were no butchers
there would then be no knifegrinders. Faith, need
is need! Hunger is hunger. Selah.
For God's sake let us have a little brandy!

Torarin

What is your occupation?

Sir Douglas

Ask the others.
From childhood I was a ne'er-do-well. Sir Archie,
you were a ne'er-do-well a little later.
We came first as hen-thieves into the world,
all three of us together. We are triplets.
A shark in the ocean spawned us three.

Sir Donald

He lies.
My father was a tailor. So I came
with a needle into the world. Hey, virgin, hey!
How do you like that? I think we agree
like needle and cloth together. . . . God forgive me,
I am a wretched sinner, and I would—
is there a priest in the neighbourhood?—I would
go to confession.

Sir Douglas

[*shakes* Sir Archie, *sets him on his feet.*
Up, Sir Archie! He
is playing the piece of the poor frozen boy.
He thinks he struts upon the boards again,
and touches all a multitude to tears.
Are you making a thaw-wind? Whom do you weep? Would you
melt out the thickly frozen sound, perhaps,
or drown in water Satan, who's at large,
together with the gulf of Tophet?

SIR DONALD

Up!
Up, up, up, up, Sir Archie! Here is brandy.
[*the servant has brought in some.*
Don't stutter and babble like a baby there!
Your mother does not know how it goes with you.
She lies in her grave, and will not turn to see.
Make ready to go now. Go!

[SIR DONALD *puts himself into position for the game of leapfrog. With an elastic bound* SIR ARCHIE *springs up and leaps over* SIR DONALD'S *back, his legs spread wide. He then bends down, and* SIR DOUGLAS *springs over him. Then* SIR DONALD *springs over* SIR DOUGLAS, *and so on, according to the well-known circus turn.*

SIR DOUGLAS

[*during the game.*
You see, we are
a jolly three-leaved clover, high jumpers: Hecht,
Iltis and Marder are our names. My brother
has white hair and red eyes. And we devour
live rabbits, if by luck they come our way.
Myself I am a knife-swallower. This one here,
a knife-thrower, and that, a maker of knives.—
How far is it to the parsonage? Where's a festival,
or a market, where three wretched comrades, three
poor pantaloons, wagging their ready tongues,
could earn a bit of bread?

Sir Archie

How far is it
to pastor Arne's? to the parsonage, thou there?

Torarin

I do not know. I am a stranger here.

Sir Donald

We want to go to confession, to avow
our sins, and to receive the holy sacrament
of communion. Strike me God if that's not true.
Where is the way to pastor Arne's parsonage?

Farmer

Where is the way: that is an easy question.
The path is all snowed over: the parsonage
buried in snowdrifts nearly to the chimney.
And, men, if you will be advised by me,
better to leave the pastor out of question.
He has wolf-hounds, and servants, and his sword,
long as a man's and shining, he can use.

Sir Douglas

A man after our own heart.

Sir Donald

[*making a sign to his comrades.*
But could we
find a night's lodging in thy barn, mine host?

Farmer

You can do that.

Sir Donald

And what have we to pay?

Farmer

To keep from making trouble, nothing more.

Sir Donald

Most gallant host! come, lads, into the barn.

Sir Douglas

[*while all three bow with comical gravity.*
Hecht, Marder, Iltis wish you a good-night.

Sir Donald

Ho, let us barricade the foxhole now.

[*He closes the door of the barn, into which along with his comrades he has disappeared. Wild laughter is heard, and immediately after a drunken droning and the hissing of the grindstone.*

Torarin

Torarin, rub thy eyes, friend. What was that?

Frederik

Ghosts!

Torarin

They were no ghosts. What must I do now, first thing?

Anne

Oh, God, they're coming out again!

Torarin

Shall I go first now to young Arnesohn,
or to the old pastor at Solberga?
For warning's needed. No matter; only forward!

Frederik

We take the same road. I shall come with thee.

SECOND SCENE

In the parsonage at Solberga. A solidly timbered room with a mighty hearth and chimney in the background. Sooty rafters. To the front, left, a closed door with steps. To the right a door with only a curtain, leading into another room. A small fire and a burning pine chip give a light from the hearth. A table is being prepared for the evening meal by Elsalil *and* Berghild. *The girls, who seem to be of the same age, between fifteen and sixteen, are also alike in general appearance, colour of hair, and clothing. They seem to be twins. Although they are gentle, there is something primeval in them. They wear their extraordinarily fair, long hair bundled up in a knot.*—Pastor Arnesohn, *in his sixties, stately, without any sign of age in hair or appearance, enters through the curtained door. He wears fur clothes and a fur cap.*

Arnesohn

Berghild, farewell. Farewell, my dear good children.

Berghild

Thou goest already, father?

Arnesohn

Yes, I go.
But I'll come back to-morrow very early.
[Berghild *comes to him. He kisses her on the brow.*
And I shall greet thy mother from thee, Berghild.

Berghild

And all my little brothers and my sisters.

Arnesohn

To-morrow thou wilt see them all again.
And ere you go to sleep, girls, do you hear;
send up for me a prayer of thanks to Heaven.
Trust me, the snow will melt to-morrow under
the holiday crowd around the house of God,
and round the manse far out into the fields.
The wind is coming up.

Berghild

This time, a year ago,
the cherry tree was in bloom. This year the ice
in the sound is still not broken. A pity, father!

Arnesohn

No matter. That won't prevent the day of honour
thy grandfather holds tomorrow. Think of it,
they call him still the best man in the north.
Not all, 'tis true, but many do: the most of them!
Thou, too, thank God with tears, my Elsalil,
that the most reverend pastor to this hour
has been preserved. God showed his favour to
him,

and he in turn showed favour, child, to thee.
To the poor orphan he is like a father.

Berghild

Grandfather calls us twins, does he not, sister?
Thou darest not call her a poor orphan, no!

Elsalil

I know I eat the bread of charity,
and every day I think upon his bounty
and pray for pastor Arne and all his kin.

Arnesohn

That's right. Never forget it.—Ninety years
my worthy father, thy grandfather, Berghild,
will see this very night when it strikes twelve.
If Heaven continues to be gracious to him
truly he'll live a hundred years and more.
Till morning, Berghild.

[*to* Elsalil.

And thou, too, good night.

[*He kisses* Berghild *on the forehead, and then* Elsalil *kisses his hand.*

Arnesohn

[*going.*

What have I still to say? My child, thy lips
are burning like live coals. What hast thou?

Elsalil

I?

Arnesohn

Yes. Has she again a little of her fever?
And what a dark spot there burns on thy throat.

Berghild

She has that often, and often she burns so;
and is none the less as merry as we others.

Arnesohn

Well, well. Good-bye, then. Is there anything
else?—
Yes, pray, my children! Pray and pray and pray!
My aged father, too, is deeply moved . . .
his white beloved temples ever bowed
in passionate adoration. Pray!—But tell me,
is Torarin, thy uncle, in the parsonage?
He asks for him. He waits for him. It seems
as if the neighbourhood of that plain man
portended joy to him.—Till morning, Berghild!
Is there anything else?—God keep, you, children,
—Pray!

[*He goes out.*

Berghild

O God, what ails me? I am silly. But
in listening to my father all at once
I had a curious feeling.—And thou too?

Elsalil

When he asked me if I were ill, I felt
the world went suddenly black before my eyes.

[*Through the curtained door come the*

vigorous old man, Pastor Arne, *and his frail wife, more than seventy years old. She leans on his arm. A pale submissive assistant clergyman follows. The girls go at once to the help of the old lady: they lead her to her chair at the table. The pastor also takes his place at the table, but remains standing upright.*

Pastor Arne

[*to* Elsalil.

Where is thy worthy uncle, Torarin?
He has been always punctual on this evening.

Berghild

We have been wondering too where he can be.

Pastor Arne

Truly the road to-day is doubly hard,
and therefore doubly long—I miss the old man.

[*A maid brings in the great soup bowl and sets it on the table. The old servant* Olof *follows her.*

Pastor Arne

Thou too sawest naught of Torarin? Eh, Olof?
He grows more deaf from day to day. Thou ask him.

The Maid

[*speaking loud in his ear.*

Torarin, the fishmonger, if he's here?
There are guests coming, and we need sea-fish.

Pastor Arne

I ask not for that reason, Torin.

Olof

Yes,
a stranger slinked to-day around the manse.

Pastor Arne

Oh, one could laugh, if it were not so sad.
Only—what's this about the stranger? Hey?

Olof

They come across the sound from Marstrand hither.

Pastor Arne

Who, dost thou mean, come over the sound?

Olof

Rapscallions.

Pastor Arne

Now, well and good, we have bolts here, and dogs!—
We'll fall to prayer . . . a storm is coming up.

Berghild

A minute since the wind blew down the chimney and made the seats and table sooty.

Pastor Arne

Well,
so let it be!—once more, then, let us pray.

"Lord Jesus, come and be our guest,
and bless what thou provided hast. Amen."

[*All, except the pastor's wife, who is already seated, take their places round the table. They take the soup with their spoons out of the common bowl. Except for the tinkling of the spoons nothing is heard for some time but the crying of the wind in the chimney.*

Pastor Arne

To-morrow we shall have a heavy day,
reverend colleague. I, too, although the occasion
gives ground for me to praise and worship God.
My son will help, the pastor Arnesohn,
but yet the burden of labour is thereby
made lighter only, and not rolled away.
They wish to honour me, my ninety years.
My reverend brothers will, one after another,
ascend the altar steps into the pulpit.
I would it were all over, almighty God.

[Elsalil, *pale, has risen from her chair.*
What is it, Elsalil?

Elsalil

A dog howled.

Pastor Arne

Is that a ground to be in terror, eh?
Who can it be but Torarin, thy uncle?
Bring us an answer, Olof; see who is there.

[Olof *goes out.*
Marstrand. Our king Johann has paid off many
soldiers. A famous Scottish regiment

of Highlanders waits there until the ice breaks.
We have now that which people call a peace,
and we've had war, and we've had famine too,
and pestilence; the devil's ne'er so busy
as at such times with discord and with stench.
It would be the same if I lived to be two hundred.
What ails you, children, and what ails the mother?

Berghild

[*strangely apprehensive.*
Grandmother does not eat.

Pastor Arne

What ails thee, mother,
that thou dost not eat, and clutchest my arm?
What is it?

His Wife

Arne!

Pastor Arne

Well?

His Wife

Hearest thou nothing?

Pastor Arne

No. What then?

His Wife

But I should like to know, Arne.

Pastor Arne

Speak on.

His Wife

Why at the farmsteading of Branehoek
they are sharpening their long knives?

Pastor Arne

Their knives, sayest thou?
Who sharpens, in God's name, knives at this hour?
What knives? Long knives? Who, then, are
they? and where?

His Wife

Only why are they sharpening their long knives,
Arne, at Branehoek?

Pastor Arne

At Branehoek,
the farm that lies two good long miles away,
they are sharpening knives? And thou canst hear
that here?

His Wife

Of course! Who could not hear it?

Pastor Arne

Is that so?
So they are sharpening knives, and thou dost
hear it?
[*He whets his knife vigorously on the bowl.*
Thou hearest that from Branehoek, if it sounds
there,
hearest it in the parsonage in Solberga?
My poor wife does not hear when a bird sings,

and so the weak infirmities of her age
make themselves felt; and far too long the doctor
has paid but little heed to the good mother.

His Wife

Arne!

Pastor Arne

Again?

His Wife

Why dost thou torture me?
Do not torment me, tell me what it means.
Hark, how it scrapes, hark, how it groans and hisses.
Why are they sharpening their long sharp knives at Branehoek?

Pastor Arne

She trembles so, my God . . .
There, see, her spoon has fallen in the soup.
And you? Why do you look so frightened? Nonsense.
What is there here to make you apprehensive?
Take her, my girls, quick, take her to her bed.

[*His wife is led out by the girls: they are weeping. The maid, too, shows signs in her face of a mysterious terror.*

Pastor Arne

Clear off the things. I will not eat. What madness!

[*He posts himself at the window, his hands*

behind his back. The servant Olof *returns.*

Who was it who came? Was it Torarin?

Olof

Your reverence,
the dog has made a noise for nothing. No one!

Pastor Arne

So, let us close the day and go to bed.
Bolt every door fast: Torarin can knock.
[Olof *goes out.*
What do you think of this most curious happening?

Assistant Clergyman

I do not know what I should say. For reason has nought to do with things of this kind, which are called in question by the preoccupation troubling from far your worthy lady's spirit. But still, it turned me cold, I say it frankly.

Pastor Arne

To-morrow we'll say more of it. Good-night.
[*The assistant clergyman goes out.*
What ails the mother?—Well, it's in God's hands.
[*He stretches himself, clothed as he is, on the bed built into the wall, and breathes deeply. Then he is heard praying aloud.*
Pater noster, qui es in coelis; sanctificetur nomen tuum; adveniat regnum tuum; fiat voluntas tua sicut in coelo, et in terra. Panem nos-

trum quotidianum da nobis hodie; et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem; sed libera nos a malo. Amen.

[*After several long pauses, in which he has settled himself comfortably in the bed, the pastor has come to the end of the prayer. Meanwhile the door in front on the left has opened, and a muffled-up man has entered silently. Nevertheless the pastor has observed him.*

Pastor Arne

So, thou art come at last, old Torarin.
I missed thee. Thou art here, and I am glad.

[*The intruder has taken a step forward. The pastor perceives that it is not Torarin.*

Eh, who art thou?

The Stranger

[*fawning tearfully.*

I am a poor lost devil
who begs you for a morsel of bread and shelter.

Arne

[*with one leap off the bed.*

How didst thou come here?

The Stranger

[*impudently.*

Through the door.

Arne

Through the door?
It is unthinkable, man, thou cam'st through the door.
All is closed up and barred when it grows dark.

The Stranger

Well, I came in here, say, on my two legs.
[*He frees his head from the muffling garment. One recognises* Sir Archie.

Arne

[*furiously.*
Then go away again on thy two legs!
And that at once, otherwise . . .

Sir Archie

[*continuing.*
Otherwise, your reverence, the poor man always got a bit of bread.

Arne

[*has thrown on his dressing gown, walks up fearlessly to the intruder, and holds the burning pine-chip to his face, lighting it up.*
Whence comest thou here so late?

Sir Archie

From far away!

Arne

One can tell by thy speech that thou art foreign.

Sir Archie

Foreign, yet more than ten years in this country.
To-day I am but a poor ragamuffin,
but there was once a time when I was rich
in gold and honour.

Arne

[*firmly.*

Thou art a Scot.

Sir Archie

Not I!

Arne

[*with certainty.*

One of these soldiers art thou, who, paid off
by our king Johann, kick their heels in Marstrand,
till they can sail again for Scotland. Come!
Thou may'st go sleep among my servants.

[*He makes for the door, past* Sir Archie. *The latter blocks his way.*

Sir Archie

Sir,
that boots not. I must further. You are rich!
Give me a silver piece and I will go.

Arne

Here, there thou hast a copper piece. Now go!

Sir Archie

[*turning the coin.*

That is a very small thing for us both, sir.

Arne

Too much for one who when folk are asleep
creeps into strangers' houses.

Sir Archie

Keep quite calm,
only keep calm, good sir, if it's convenient.

Arne

Dost thou stand in my way? Ho, wake the servants!

Sir Archie

Your reverence, be advised, keep yourself calm.

Arne

Good then, I am quite calm. What dost thou want?

Sir Archie

Give me a handful, two handfuls, not more,
of your silver pieces.

Arne

I am stricken dumb.

Sir Archie

Sir, that is good. That is far better, sir,
trust me, than crying and waking people.—Is
that box there on the bed your treasure chest?

Arne

[*snatching a sword from the wall.*
Treasure or no, here is my sword! Thou seest it!
I'm not the man whom any fellow like thee,
a knave like thee, can corner.

Berghild

[*invisible, from the next room.*
Grandfather,
whom art thou chiding?

Sir Archie

Sir, trust me, I mean
no evil to you or to your children. Scold
no more. Make no noise. Do not cry for help.
What lies upon its ear and snores, well, let it
snore on. God and Saint James stand by you
that you may see where your advantage lies.
A hatful of good silver from your box!
Here is the hat! Fill it without a word,
and I shall vanish like a light.

Arne

Thou villain,
thou darest to be so saucy to my face?
Pack, now! I am no fool! No, not a farthing.

Sir Archie

You have been warned.—
[*He turns round.*
It's time, Sir Donald.
[Sir Donald *enters noiselessly, but his air is not nearly so humble as* Sir Archie's.

Sir Donald

Here.

Arne

Ah, so you come in pairs?

Sir Donald

Such is the case,
by your leave, worthy sir. When we still served
the good king Johann in his glorious wars
we were as numberless as locusts then.
Don't let my looks dismay you; for the door
was shut, and we had to get in the wash-house
by the chimney. Now, how stands it with you,
sirs?
I hope you are agreed.

Berghild

[*as before.*
Who is with thee,
grandfather?

Sir Donald

Is someone speaking?

Arne

Berghild, rise up,
and waken all the servants!

Sir Donald

No, good sir,
by Saint James, no, here I must contradict you.

You are a gentleman, we are two others.
And all in all we three, three gentlemen.
So give them orders to keep quiet, for
the witness who's not here does not disturb us.
He may live. But every other one must die.

Arne

Berghild, be still, and do not speak, for God's sake!

Sir Donald

Pardon, is that a second exit?

Arne

No.

Sir Donald

Permit me, but I must convince myself.
[*He goes behind the curtain and comes back again.*
All right!—Sit down, for we have ample time
to portion out the treasure. Be quite calm,
your reverence, come, be reasonable. Sit down,
and, on my oath, we shall not harm a hair.

Arne

God knows it is a bitter thing for me
to take part in a business such as this
in my own house. God tries me hard. I see it.

Sir Donald

'Tis so. God tries you. God tries you through us.
For where your treasure is, your heart is also,

says the apostle. And now God will prove you,
if He's your treasure, and your heart lies with
Him,
or with that other treasure in the chest,
beside your coveted and God-damned Mammon.

Arne

[*With the sweat of anguish on his brow,
sitting at the table.*
Exempt God's holy scriptures from your speech.
I am not rich. I am poor. You are deceived.

Sir Donald

Then share your poverty with us, that's all.

Arne

[*clutching his forehead.*
Am I dreaming? Have I gone mad?

Sir Donald

Have you anything
in the house to wet one's tongue?

Arne

[*Stands up, takes with trembling hands a
flask of wine from a cupboard, and sets
glasses on the table.*
Yes, here it is.
I shall forget who you are, and shall treat you
as if you were invited, welcome guests.
Drink. There is bacon hanging in the chimney.
Eat.

Eat; here is bread. And when you break it, think
of Jesus on the cross, and of his wounds,
forgetting not the mighty hour of reckoning,
which you must face at last for all your deeds.
God shield you from damnation everlasting.

SIR DONALD

[*after drinking greedily.*
The time runs out, Sir Archie.

ARNE

[*with a sudden outburst of horrible passion.*
You are murderers!
Help! There are murderers, murderers, murderers here!
[*He springs back, sword in hand, and stands on his defence, his back to the wall.*
[SIR DOUGLAS *enters.*

SIR DOUGLAS

Stop bellowing, old beast, or I shall make you
dumb!—What's to happen? Are we going to practise
our paternosters in a prayer-meeting, what?
until the devil takes us by the windpipe
and we, like Scottish muttons, arslings dangle
each with his gullet slit from ear to ear?
Think for what reason we are here, gentlemen;
else this will be a cursed play, as silly
as senseless. They are stirring in the stalls,
servants and maids are creeping from the straw.

Arne

Devilish triad! Knave, art thou the third
in this band of dishonoured villains? Are
you Scotsmen? Are you men? Yea, human
beings?
Oh, that your mothers could but see you now,
you wicked ragamuffins, your brave mothers,
you scum, you refuse! They would spit on you,
and would disown you as you were toad-spawn.

Sir Douglas

[*makes to strike at* Arne. *The old man seizes his arm and shakes the knife out of his hand. It flies into the corner,* Sir Douglas *after it. He knuckles on his knee.*

Not bad. Well done. A tolerable handgrip.

[Elsalil *rushes screaming into the room, and tries to gain the exit door.*

Elsalil

Help! They are murdering us! Rescue, rescue!

Sir Archie

What's that?

Sir Donald

[*who has seized* Elsalil, *and keeps his hand over her mouth.*

It is no angel of the Lord;
a wench, and nothing more, like a thousand others,
like nothing more, too, than a pallid corpse.

Sir Archie

[*throws himself on* Sir Donald's *arm, which is raised to strike* Elsalil *down.*
Hold! Wait! What is the use of that? Shall we
butcher defenceless children? I say no!

Sir Douglas

No foolishness, come, keep your wits about you.
If you lose courage now, when there is need
I wish you to the devil after it.

Sir Archie

What do you say?

Sir Douglas

Get out, and let us be, sir.
It can be done without you. You, Sir Donald,
be quick, disgust her of this crying for ever.
[Berghild *rushes in.*

Berghild

They're murdering my sister. Help, here, help!
[Berghild *has seized* Sir Donald *from behind round the neck, and is strangling him. He tries to shake her off.*

Sir Donald

Into what nooses does one tumble here?
Has the pious villain lemurs in his service
that drink your blood and bite your windpipe through?

Arne

Berghild, come here! Save thyself, come to me!

Sir Archie

[*intercepts a blow which* Sir Donald *aims at* Berghild *with his knife.*

Hold! She is brave and lovely, give her time.
Instead of fleeing, she fights for her sister.

Berghild

Accursed, hellish villains, kill me then!
You cowardly and creeping rabble, who
under cover of night assassinate the helpless.
Let the others live, and kill me, kill me only!
I will not have this world, which I must share
with you; nor call myself a human being,
if you are so called; nor see another day
if it huddles you and me in common light.

Sir Douglas

How long will the magpie babble on like this . . .

Sir Archie

Hold! She shall speak. And give her time.
You know me!
She has but little breath now granted her,
a wretched residue, a few poor words;
and what she makes of it is no botched work.

Sir Douglas

Have you, sir, an attack of your old evil?
staggering beneath the cross of adolescence?
Climb on it, and let us carry you, cross and all.

Arne

Set the bells ringing! Ringing, ringing, ringing, the bells!

[*There is heard indeed through the soughing of the wind the sound of bells, sometimes near, sometimes far.*

Sir Douglas

[*while he stabs the pastor repeatedly in the back.*

Oh, yes, the bells! Ringing, ringing, the bells!

Arne

Do you strike me? What's this? I fall! You do that to my ninety years? Oh, oh!

[Pastor Arne *collapses and dies. A momentary palsy of horror keeps everybody dumb.*

Sir Archie

What's that? Is he dead?

Sir Douglas

That's my opinion.

Berghild

[*Throws herself into* Sir Archie's *arms.* Help me! I will not die! Oh, help me, help me!

Sir Douglas

Make short work, Sir Archie.

Sir Archie

Hold!

Sir Douglas

Then let me do it.

Sir Archie

No one shall touch her, yea, I say it, no one.
Who touches her . . . I see red!—You know me.

Sir Donald

Sir, if drink and frenzy make you senseless,
we are still men enough to practise force.

Sir Douglas

To practise force, yes, make short work of her,
for now she may not live.

Sir Donald

She may not live.

Sir Archie

Thou mayest not, hearest thou, they say. Thou mayest not!
Thou mayest not live! So perish, then, by me.
[Berghild *dies, stabbed by* Sir Archie.

Sir Douglas

Now there is nothing for it but wading, swimming,
till we're across the moat and gain the walls!

Pitch and brimstone, forward! Ladders! Forward!

[SIR DOUGLAS *and* SIR DONALD *rush out through the curtained door.* SIR ARCHIE *remains standing, the dead* BERGHILD *in his arms.* ELSALIL *has been forgotten in the confusion. With wide eyes she follows everything, from the background where she cowers.*

SIR ARCHIE

Holy Maria, Mother of God! O what
a heavy burden is this? Whence came I here?
What maelstrom was it rove me forth and washed
me here upon this bloody sandbank? Or
who lured me, as a will o' the wisp lures children,
into this blood-swamp? Or how have I come,
losing my way, to this dark bottomless chamber,
into this pit, from which eternally
there's no way out? Above all, what did I seek?
Perchance the burden hanging in my arms?
Wide of the mark! How wide! Yea, I could laugh.
I came for gold: fodder for whores and gaming,
provision for gluttonous and dissolute nights!
Ah, but not this! By God, not thee! Not thee!
Heavy she hangs, heavier she drags me down.
Let go thy grip, dead maiden. For believe me,
the warmth of my body's not enough
to fan again the spent fires of thy life.
Instead of that thou weddest me to thy coldness.
Who could have guessed at this, Sir Archie, where
and how thou wouldest celebrate thy marriage,
and with what bride, and at what altar, and

wedded and coupled by what bloody priest!

[*He lays* Berghild *on the floor, and kneels beside her.*

Weary. Yea, I am weary. And my limbs
are strangely unconsenting, dull and lifeless.
To speak no more, and to think even less!
Who grasps this? Hire some one to murder me
while I'm asleep! Thirst! I thirst for the hangman.

THIRD SCENE

The court room of the Sheriff of Bohus. *The sheriff and his clerk sit behind the bar. Before the bar stand* Pastor Arnesohn, Captain Frederik, *the* Farmer *from Branehoek and his daughter* Anne, and Torarin *near his niece* Elsalil. Elsalil *is seated; her face is of an unnatural pallor, and has a distorted, fixed expression.*

The Sheriff

This deed is terrible! Beyond all measure
inhuman, terrible! Truly, that is certain,
most worthy and reverend pastor Arnesohn.
Yet speak in measure; you harm else, God knows,
the course of justice, and hinder our enquiry.

Arnesohn

I hope not to do that, sir Sheriff, No!
But to keep measured speech upon this point
is not my will, and it can never be.
And who requires it of me does not grasp
what has befallen me, what blow has struck me.

The Sheriff

It is known and understood.

Arnesohn

[*to* Elsalil.
My girl, speak out!
For wherefore else should God have rescued thee,
but thee alone, out of that night of murder?
Thee, who wert almost least among them all,
God's angel of vengeance bore through that blood-bath
that there might be a witness and accuser
against these black beasts risen from the abyss.

The Sheriff

We know well how it stands with this poor girl:
the horrors of which she has been the witness
have quite deranged her mind. For you have heard
how to your most imperative admonitions
she has thrown out but dark and meaningless words.
This witness' testimony to-day is worthless:
Perchance it will not be so in the future,
if time should heal her all-disordered mind.
The one thing that can help us here is patience,
while an untimely eagerness hinders all.

Arnesohn

No more of patience, Sheriff, nor of the future!
This moment, this day, this *now* are all in all.
Who speaks of patience and the future builds
golden bridges for the doers to flee over.
If Justice thus gives up the sword of vengeance
to idle rust, then say I: help thyself,
thou, who in vain hast called on her for help!

The Sheriff

Most worthy pastor, come, be reasonable.
By God, I do not want to be compelled
to have you punished for contempt of court.

Arnesohn

Sir, you preach resignation far too lightly;
think yourself into what has happened to me,
and then start fresh again. Slaughterers have . . .
think of that: in Solberga stands a manse,
and slaughterers have . . . what it is they have
butchered,
were lambs or cattle, do you think? A wide,
wide shot! It was an aged man, my father!
It was an honoured aged woman, my mother!
It was my . . . it was my loved child . . . your
leave,
for I must calm myself!—She was called Berghild.
And on the ground, and in among the stalls,
the servants all lay with their gullets cut!
Yes! Is there one who doubts it? So it was,
not otherwise! And now preach moderation.

The Sheriff

I say the jurisdiction does its duty,
and cannot be reproached for negligence.
It has done what it can, and it will do,
what's possible to find out the transgressors,
and whether you are moderate or not.

Arnesohn

There cannot be enough done in this case,
enough is never done so long as blood

of innocents is not appeased by murderers' blood.
How will a man in Sweden after this
be able to laugh, if this unnatural
and bloody mystery lies like a weight
on terror-stricken Christendom? Who will close
an eye of nights, from the king down to the beggar,
knowing that the doers of such dreadful deeds
are not yet blotted out from the earth's face?
Again, my girl, I admonish thee to speak.

The Sheriff

I am the judge here, and it is my task,
and mine alone, to examine the witnesses.
And here are some who are still in their right minds.
Thou'rt the ship-captain Frederik?

Frederik

Yes, your worship.

The Sheriff

And thou there the fishmonger Torarin?

Torarin

Yes, your worship.

The Sheriff

And thou there the farmer of Branehoek, and this maid is thy daughter?

Farmer

Yes, sir, my daughter, and her name is Anne.

The Sheriff

Well, then, you people, you saw upon that night,
all of you here saw three suspicious men,
who on the barn floor of thy steading, farmer,
whetted themselves long knives?

Frederik, Torarin, Farmer, Anne

Yes, it was so.

The Sheriff

Relate to us now the incident, each in turn.

Torarin

Begin thou.

Farmer

No, begin thou, Torarin.

Torarin

Let Frederik begin, seeing that I found him
already at thy farm when I arrived.

Frederik

Well, then, there were three fellows there, sir
Sheriff.

The Sheriff

What did they look like?

Frederik

Bad, not good, God strike me.
Black! Most like gloomy devils out of hell.

The Sheriff

Thy ship is called the "Wildflower"?

Frederik

Yes, a galley
that sits fast frozen now upon the ice.

The Sheriff

How camest thou to the farm, what didst thou have
Captain, to seek so late at Branehoek?

Frederik

God help me, something else than what I found.

The Sheriff

What was it?

Frederik

Sir, I came to seek a midwife, because my wife lay on my ship in child-bed, and I could find help nowhere.

[*he weeps.*

The Sheriff

Torarin, how camest thou to the farm?

Torarin

With sea-fish. I intended to go that night on to the manse, to pastor Arne's, for that's been our custom for many years.

The Sheriff

What custom do you mean?

Torarin

That I should bring him haddocks on his birthday.

Arnesohn

And for the first time thou didst drop the custom
just at the very time when this same custom
might well have saved the life of my dear father.

Torarin

I have already thought of that, your reverence.
God knows how much my conscience has accused me.
And yet it was that very night as if
Heaven itself had sworn to hinder help.

The Sheriff

Tell on.

Torarin

At first, when I came to the farm,
it was as if a gnat sat in my ear,
and buzzed. I thought to myself; hey, what is that?
That must be a gnat of Satan, in the open,
with a full moon, and it freezing stone and bone.

Arnesohn

[*impatiently.*

Yea, Torarin, thou art that clever man
that strains at a gnat, and swallows camels whole.

The Sheriff

Your reverence, do not interrupt. Go on!

Torarin

Then the assassins sprang out of the barn.
It happened so quickly, sir, I did not know
whether it might not only be a dream.
They reeled off random speeches, called themselves
high jumpers, Iltis, Marder, Hecht, by name.
Wanted to go to a fair, and God knows what.

The Sheriff

And did they not ask too for Pastor Arne?

Arnesohn

They did so, and that is my quarrel with thee!
It was thy duty to run through the snowstorm,
through ice and fire, I tell thee, even barefoot,
to bring the news of danger to my father.
Even wert thou with the warning on thy tongue
slaughtered upon the threshold of Solberga.

Torarin

So it was, I don't deny it. It serves me right.

Arnesohn

What wert thou not indebted for, yea, everything,
to that dear man of God! Thy sister died
on a bed of sin, an ignominious death,
and was buried in unconsecrated ground.
The child of sin, to whom she had given birth,

my noble father took into his house:
she cowers here! He loved her as a daughter.

Torarin

Have pity!

Arnesohn

What is pity? Had these bloodhounds
a shred of pity? Did the imploring prayers
of the poor victims, begging for their lives,
find any hearing from these monsters, who
butchered my best-beloved without mercy?

The Sheriff

That is enough, sir! Not another word.
I bow myself before your grief, but yet
it is ignoble how you set upon
a simple man like this. It is not our business
to lay the guilt of that black crime on any
except the criminals themselves. Now tell me
what happened to thee, and what hindered thee
from being at the pastor's house in time.

Torarin

God! God!—The snow, the tempest hindered me.
Snowdrifts as high as houses hid the paths;
even two, for Captain Frederik was with me,
could struggle no further forward with the sledge.
That left me only the way round by the ice.
The air was still and clear till then. Oh yes,
till then. But suddenly a storm broke loose,
so strong the stars were blown about like
torches.—
And then we could not go even by the ice.

Frederik, is it not true we pulled and hauled
for a whole hour upon the selfsame spot?
Heaven knows the state of mind that I was in;
but I can hardly make it clear to men.
What kind of storm was that? Who will avow
it?
Firstly the devil-ghosts at Branehoek,
and then the devil's weather in the bay . . .

Arnesohn

My father was a soldier of God, his life
was high above reproach: dost thou affirm
that over such a holy man of God
the demon rabble of hell has any power?

The Sheriff

And thou didst find thy wife in the birth-throes,
Captain?

Frederik

I did. . . . We heard her screaming
a mile off from the ship through all that tempest.

The Sheriff

And since thou art a man of varied knowledge
he asked thee to give succour to his wife,
and thou didst go on board to do him service?

Torarin

It was even so.

Arnesohn

Meanwhile the time flew by,
the manse lay at the mercy of the murderers.

The Sheriff

Thou sawest, as stated in the first protocol,
eastwards from the ship the red glow of a fire?

Torarin

What more is there to say? But, yes, I did;
and I made haste, though I was far from thinking
it could be at Solberga, or indeed
that it was Pastor Arne's manse that burned.

The Sheriff

The protocol says now that thou didst meet
some people . . .

Torarin

No, not met them. I heard voices
of men that urged a horse on. Gee up there!
and hup! came echoing across the ice, and whistling
cracks of a brandished whip. And then, sir Sheriff,
my blood turned cold within me, I confess it,
it was so ghostly and uncanny.

The Sheriff

Then
the noises vanished towards the gaping rift
that opens like a great lake in the ice.

Torarin

By God, it was so. Then came suddenly
a hellish noise from yonder, from the rift

as if a thousand devils were affrighted,
as if a hundred thousand damned souls
shrieked in a desperate confusion. Then
a cloud of black tumultuous feathers shot
up in the night, and almost touched the skies.

Arnesohn

And from this the conclusion's drawn that there
the murderers were drowned: but that is wrong!
I know too well already this procedure
whereby your justice sings itself to sleep.

The Sheriff

You err, sir Pastor.

Arnesohn

True, my father's gold
was borne away by some one on a sledge,
drawn by the old nag of the parsonage;
so much is certain! And no one denies
that horse and sledge lie rotting beneath the ice.
The murderous band, however, got away,
covering up their tracks as best they could:—
if they could manage to prove to their pursuers
that they were foundered in the ice and drowned,
then they could first in full security
enjoy the fruits of their disgraceful deed.

The Sheriff

Thou didst come near the rift. Speak, Torarin.
Speak freely out; do not be led astray.
Thou dost incline, I know, to the opinion
which pastor Arnesohn stubbornly contests.

Torarin

I do indeed, your worship.

The Sheriff

Give thy reasons.

Torarin

Well, then. You all know where I found the girl.
Scarcely ten steps away from the crevasse
I picked her up for dead. When I had done that
the people from Solberga were there already,
and spoke to one another of the murder.
I could not trust my ears at first. I clutched
my forehead with my hands, and pinched myself,
and said: this surely is an evil dream.
But finally I knew that it was no dream.
And then I clutched my temples with both hands,
for I had almost lost my wits. And she
cried all the time: The murderers are drowned.

Arnesohn

She lied! She knows it is not so! I swear it!
True, it was not a lie deliberate: no:
the guardian spirit of pimps and murderers
extorts from her the thing she would not say,
and what she would say he holds firmly bound.
But look at her! Does not her spirit seem
fast bound in chains? Does not the dreadful anguish
of helplessness flit o'er her face? In brief:
here is the one who knows! Here is she! Here!
She is, and remains, the instrument of requital.—
Though now thou seemest blind, thou'lt see once more,

and with thy finger point the murderers out.—
We shall pray ever with her, and we shall
fight day and night the foe of God in her
with God's help and God's word. And thou wilt
not
ever again, like a belated Christ,
provide pretexts for hell. Their plan was subtle,
and yet transparent: for its object was
to trample on and sully with dishonour
the man of God, the cornerstone of faith,
so that the folk should whisper: "there, you see
what breed the Arnes and the Arnesohns
are in their hearts. Cast out by God himself!"
Let it be so! Nay, not so, Lucifer!
I do not think to fall into the trap,
and the Lord God also will not have it so!
No, no and no! I say no! By no means!
And if it turns out otherwise, should God
keep silence, and speak not the word of vengeance,
the word of justice, if his decision is such
that both He and the deed stay veiled in night,
then I am unworthy of his further service.
Then is the church given over to hell-fire,
and the flock's fate is sealed. And I myself,
the shepherd, am perhaps in such a case
a wolf among the wolves, and prey on lambs.
[*He rushes out.*

The Sheriff

By God, a passionate giant of a man.
How the force of his dead father lives in him!
A marvellous race! None better in the north.

FOURTH SCENE

A small wine-shop next to the fish-store in Torarin's *cottage. On the right a step leads through a little door which is only curtained into the fish-store. In the back wall there is a tiny window. On its sill are sea-kale and aloes. To the left in the wall there is an open hearth, and a chimney. Beside that another little curtained door, leading into the sleeping room. In front of the hearth a rough, rather long table, and wooden joint-stools.*

The winter sun falls sharp and bright through the window.

The sound of bag-pipes is heard, and now and then the shouts of men dancing.

Near the fire sits Kathrin, *knitting a stocking.*

The shop bell tinkles. In the door leading to the shop appears Sir Archie. *He wears the magnificent uniform of a field-officer of Scottish mercenaries. One could not recognise in him the vagabond of the night of murder. His movements are slow and elegant. It is true that in his demeanour there is in general a lurking watchfulness.*

Sir Archie

Your pardon, honest people.

Kathrin

[*who has not noticed him, startled.*
Sir, what do you want?

Sir Archie

You have a shop. I want to purchase something.

Kathrin

Did the bell ring?

Sir Archie

Oh yes, quite bravely, mistress,
quite loud, so that I felt I was a thief.
But if you leave the shop alone like that
and do not hear the ringing of your bell,
then it can happen to you, my good woman,
that someone really will clean out your till.

Kathrin

Yes, yes, sir, you are truly right in that.—
What would you like to buy? How can I serve
you?

Sir Archie

Excuse me, I am tallish for your door.
Am I allowed to enter?

Kathrin

Oh, the step!

Sir Archie

[*who has not seen the step down from the door, and has stumbled.*
'Sdeath! With this door one falls into the house.

Kathrin

We are not superstitious, and don't take it
as a bad omen.

Sir Archie

That is right, nor I.
Excuse me if I sit.
[*he sits down.*
I am a stranger,
I do not mean in Sweden, but here in Marstrand!
I see much here that is quite new to me:
the people's customs and traditions, how
they live, and so forth. You are cosy here.

Kathrin

If you find the room pleasant, sir, draw nearer,
and warm yourself a little at the fire.

Sir Archie

You are very kind. But do not trouble yourself!
I will not be a burden, truly. Tell me,
the Scotsmen, that are making merry out there,
and buy this thing and that out of your shop,
do they behave well, as their duty is?—
If you've complaints to make, speak freely out!

Kathrin

They are orderly, and pay me honestly.

Sir Archie

Now, God be thanked: for that is their command.
But look, there hangs the picture of my king,
who is still more your own king. But although
I served his Swedish majesty, I am

a Scotsman. And he always was to me,
I may say, a most gracious bounteous friend.—
Now, I begin to wonder: is this then
the house of the fishmonger Torarin?

Kathrin

Why certainly. This is the very house.

Sir Archie

Tell me, has anyone asked yet for Sir Archie?

Kathrin

Till now, your highness, no, I have not heard.

Sir Archie

What, no one? Eh?

Kathrin

And who then would it be?

Sir Archie

A ship-captain, who has a freight for Leith,
and who could take us with him back to Scotland.

Kathrin

That well might be a bit of business
for captain Frederik.

Sir Archie

Yes, Frederik was his name.

[Torarin *enters out of the shop, muffled up in his winter coat.*

Torarin

God be with thee, Kathrin.

Kathrin

This is my brother.

Sir Archie

So then, you are not captain Frederik?

Torarin

I am not he, your highness, by your leave,
but I come hither from him with a message.
We've both been on the witness-stand again—
that is, sir, in the sheriff's court at Bohus.

Kathrin

Another court already?

Torarin

Yes, already!
There will be many more, and always bootless,
no matter how pastor Arnesohn exerts himself.—
The captain Frederik begs to be excused,
your lordship. For his wife is sick to death,
and she will never rise from bed again.—

Kathrin

Well, sir, if it's not this ship, it's another;
to get to Scotland there is chance enough.

Torarin

Yes, she is right. But what do you think,
Kathrin,

already they've discovered a fresh clue.
It leads to the coast-hovels here in Marstrand.
The pastor does not rest.

Sir Archie

What pastor rests not?

Torarin

Both of them do not rest; neither the dead,
nor yet the living, who is the dead man's son.
And I especially am given no rest.

Sir Archie

'Tis said your brandy is the best there is;
it comes in handy, give me a little of it.
A pastor's dead? What are you speaking of?

Torarin

When you ask that, sir, then I must believe
that you know naught of what's in every mouth.

Sir Archie

It almost seems so. Well, what is it, then?

Torarin

The ghastly deed of blood up at Solberga.

Sir Archie

Hold, yes, I get it. Something dawns on me.
Was that not—yes, yes—was his name not Arne?
They said he was a clergyman and a miser.

Torarin

That he accumulated ill-got gain
is nothing more than idle lies and slander.

Sir Archie

But was the pastor rich? Or is that too
only a fairy-tale of evil people?

Torarin

Oh, let us talk of other things, your highness.

[Torarin *goes into the next room, sighing, and trying to conceal his agitation.*

Kathrin

Your lordship heard how my poor brother sighed.
I pray you, let him be, ask him no more.
As for the tale, be pleased to know, your grace,
that three inhuman monsters, as is said,
like raging animals broke in at night
into Solberga parsonage, burning, plundering
and butchering without pity all who were there,
from the old pastor down to his grand-daughter,
servant and maid and curate, every one.

Sir Archie

Oh, is that something which has happened lately,
or is it a swan-song out of old times,
which lives to-day but in unfounded rumour?

Kathrin

It is a thing which happened lately, sir.

Sir Archie

And of the murderers they have not a trace?

Kathrin

The murderers were drowned in Hacke Fjord.

Sir Archie

In Hacke Fjord? But how? It's frozen solid.

Kathrin

There was a storm that night: they lost their way.
Carrying their booty on the pastor's sledge,
to which they had yoked the pastor's horse as well,
they slipped into an open hole in the ice.

Sir Archie

And are folk certain that they ended so?

Kathrin

All do not think so, but the most part do.

Sir Archie

But is there not some talk of a fresh clue,
that leads to Marstrand, as your brother says?

Kathrin

He may speak of it, but he does not believe it.
[Torarin *comes in again.*

Torarin

Yes, so it is. She's not far wrong, your lordship.
I saw the murderers before the deed,

while they made sharp their knives at Branehoek.
Now, I know every man that lives in Marstrand,
I know each lane and corner in the place,
and almost all the foreigners who swarm
about the harbour: and since I think of nothing
but how to find the pastor Arne's murderers
and bring them to the block—it is so, sir—
I'd have discovered them long since in Marstrand,
for at the first glance I'd be bound to know them.

Sir Archie

How did they look? Thou sayest thou hadst a glimpse
of them as they were doing something or other.

Torarin

Most hideous devils were they, all the three.
Sooty, like charcoal burners. And with nostrils
like horses. Bulging lips, all slobbery and red.
Red pupils to their eyes, white saw-edged teeth.

Sir Archie

[*standing up.*

What is to pay, good woman?

Kathrin

It's not worth while.
And is your lordship going then already?

Sir Archie

[*indicating the increasing noise of bagpipes and dancers before the house.*

The folk out there have grown too merry for me.

[Elsalil *appears and walks slowly across the room straight to the door of the shop. She stretches both hands in front of her, her head tilted back, like that of a blind person. She finds her way slowly, as if she were walking in her sleep. Her magnificent yellow hair falls loose almost to her heels. She wears only a long shift, caught together about her hips, and so exactly resembles* Berghild *as she appeared on the night of the murder. The pallor of her flesh and her whole appearance has something ethereal about it.*

Sir Archie

[*from the instant he sees* Elsalil *stands frozen into rigidity.*
What's this?

Kathrin

[*who has her back turned to Elsalil.*
What can I do for you, your lordship? Are you not well, sir?

Sir Archie

No! You've guessed it.

Kathrin

Have a sniff of smelling-salts. Bring them, Torarin!

Torarin

Support yourself on me, sir. There! What was it?

Sir Archie

A diabolical obsession. Let be. 'Tis over.

Kathrin

But how can a thing come on so suddenly?
Your lordship's face is green.

Sir Archie

Leave me in peace.
An image in my brain. I do not know
myself what this mad business signifies.—
There, that is better. Now it's gone. No, no!
God damn my soul! That helped me. It is vanished.

[*The figure of* Elsalil *has in fact during these last words gone out through the shop door.*

My beaker! Ah!

[*He knocks it over inadvertently so that it rolls on the floor.*

You see, I am a blockhead,
not only a fool, a weakling, and God knows what.
Another beaker, full to the brim with brandy.

Kathrin

Yes, that's the thing: it gives you new heart, sir.

[Kathrin *disappears into the shop to fetch the brandy.*

Sir Archie

Where is my stool? Give me it. I must sit:
I mean, I want to. The evil is hereditary,
it comes from the family of the thanes of Ross,

through a great-grandmother passed on to us.
You are alarmed! What a stupid accident!
I, too! I was alarmed myself, God knows.
Yet we are all but grass before the Lord.

Torarin

Your grace has eaten perhaps some poisonous fish?
Armenian earth and vinegar's a good remedy.
Or do these evil strokes come often to you?

Sir Archie

Not often. The last one was before the campaign.
But the campaign itself fatigued me much.
It is to blame if the evil breaks out again.—
Enough. Forget it! It's not worth discussing.
The devil! I am bathed in death-cold sweat.—
But easy, easy! One does not die so lightly.
[Kathrin *enters with the brandy*

Kathrin

The lass is in the shop there, Torarin.
Just think, she stands, and she looks round about
as if she were again in her right mind.
And yet she is but dreaming, as it seems.
How did she get through the room here? Didst
thou see her?

Torarin

Elsalil's in the front shop? That is strange.

Kathrin

Yes, strange. For she lay still, a minute since,
upon her bed there in the inner room,

and there's no way from it into the shop
except here through the bar where we are sitting.

TORARIN

Did you see a maiden passing through the room?

SIR ARCHIE

I? No! By the holy blood of Jesus, no!
You are deceived. No!

TORARIN

Do not fly out, sir.
A poor sick maid lives with us in this house,
a helpless orphan, and a niece of mine.

SIR ARCHIE

How? What? Speak clearly! You confuse my head.
Forgive me. This small room's too narrow. Farewell.
I am accustomed to the open air.
And hark: you'll earn a good sum for yourselves,
if you're disposed to find a ship for Scotland
for my Scots blades and me, and bring me news.
I have my quarters at the "Golden Anchor."

[*He springs up, draws on his cloak of sable, takes his bonnet and his gloves, and goes. Before the shop door he starts back.*

Where is the maiden?

TORARIN

What maiden?

Sir Archie

Oh, you know,
the invisible maid who went out through this room.

Kathrin

Your lordship means perhaps our poor sick niece?

Torarin

[*to* Kathrin.
If what thou sayest is true: there, in the shop.

Sir Archie

Where? In the shop? Where I must go through now?

Kathrin

Comfort yourself, sir, she won't see or hear you.

Sir Archie

Don't you believe it. She knows well what she's after.
Perchance she can be seen, though, through the curtain.
[*He peers cautiously, as if through a key-hole.*

Torarin

[*aside.*
Kathrin, the nobleman behaves most strangely;
It seems to me that he's not quite all there.

Sir Archie

[*with decision.*
This is no way for me. I shall stay here,

even though I sit like a rat within the trap.

[*He takes his place again abruptly at the table.*

Good wife, bring me a third glass of thy brandy.

Kathrin

We are truly sorry if the maid disturbs you.

Sir Archie

Oh, there is nothing can be done to help it.
Women will always have the final word.

Torarin

Kathrin, thou'd better put her straight to bed,
and lock her safe this time within her room.
One can believe her aspect startled you.
For she was present on the night of murder,
and escaped from it but as a living corpse.

Sir Archie

Don't speak of it. I know enough. I know it.
Why has she visited me when asleep?
But why then does she sniff so through the air,
as if she smelt a man somewhere about?

Torarin

Does she do that?

Sir Archie

Yes, faith, there in the shop!

Torarin

Kathrin, go look.

Sir Archie

Nay, wait. She'll come herself.

Torarin

You're wrong, sir. We are honourable people. Do not believe that she is of that stamp.

Sir Archie

Oh, we shall see.

Torarin

Kathrin, by God, she's coming!

Sir Archie

Well then. Of course. But I will not give way. Here lies my charm against witches. We shall see.

[*Slowly, exactly as she did the first time,* Elsalil *appears again, with head tilted back and eyes closed, as if she were following a scent. With hands stretched out before her she draws nearer and nearer in a straight line towards* Sir Archie. *The latter, as he said his last words, has drawn his dagger and laid it before him.*—Elsalil *is now so near to* Sir Archie *that her outstretched palms touch his temples. Slowly he puts his arms around her and draws her down on his knee.*

Kathrin

She knows not what she does, sir!

Sir Archie

[*wildly, imperatively, with his hand on his sword.*

Out of here!

[Torarin *and* Kathrin *draw back in terror and go out.*

Nightwanderer, comest thou from the grave? Nay, speak!
to visit me in the open light of day?
And has the old miser in his burial-pit
hidden the best part of his treasure-store,
that thou comest up with so much trailing gold
upon thy temples? Berghild thou art called.
The old man called thee Berghild. Oh, thou dead
and ice-cold maiden whom my dagger slew,
come closer to me, that I make thee warm.

Elsalil

Yes, yes, I'm freezing! Warm me, warm me through.

Sir Archie

Hark, in thy ear I'll tell thee why I am here.
As a robber that is out to steal thy honey.
Thou melting waxen phantom in my arms,
thou cool celled honey house, what knocks in thee
so hard, so loud, as if it would break through?
Nay, not so, here are hills, and underneath
a miner hammers, hammers yellow gold
in this the sweetest pit-shaft. Fair—how fair!—
and young—how young!—The most unreal—real
shape made of snow, within all full of fire,
which fever-hot glows on thy burning lips.

Elsalil

Lord, I have sought for thee, dost thou know that?

Sir Archie

Long since! I've known it long, how thou hast
followed me.
So, nearer, nearer!—And I have known long
that from thy kisses there is no deliverance,
yea, even if thy kiss is poisonous
and kills. For since the hour when thou didst
kiss me
with bloody mouth in dying, there has burned
the poison in me, torn me, and destroyed me!—
Yes, I am dead although I live, as thou
art living although dead. Oh, what a being!
But now 'tis well, thou art beside me.

Elsalil

Yes,
at last I am beside thee.

Sir Archie

See, thou lovest me
with wildest passion, but not less passionately
thou broodest on revenge. Thy treacherous being,
Empuse, is woven out of hate and love.
I know that thou art full of spite. What matter?
Sooner or later with a swift fierce bite
under the feigned guise of a passionate kiss
thou'lt tear my gullet with thy wolfish fangs.
What matters it? My life's at stake, so be it.
Frolics of hell must keep the devil's laws,
lewdly and madly; 'tis ill to woo with angels.

ELSALIL

[*awakes, starts, tears herself free, springs away.*

Jesus, Mary, Mother of God. Oh help me!

SIR ARCHIE

[*has sprung up at the same time, passes his hand over his forehead.*

Help me too, if you can. I am light-headed.

ELSALIL

What is it has happened to me? Who art thou?

SIR ARCHIE

[*sharply, quite changed.*

Do me the favour to say first who thou art.

ELSALIL

I am not Berghild. I am Elsalil.

SIR ARCHIE

Berghild? Who speaks of Berghild? Who is Berghild?

ELSALIL

Berghild—she is my sister at the parsonage.

SIR ARCHIE

This is a bar, child, not a parsonage.

ELSALIL

Am I at Uncle Torarin's?

Sir Archie

It seems so.

Elsalil

And who art thou?

Sir Archie

A human being, what else?

Elsalil

I am afraid of thee! I'll cry for help!

Sir Archie

Then wert thou foolish twice, to be afraid,
and to cry help. For I am to be feared
only in time of war, and not in peace.
Idleness mounts into my head. My brain
ferments and bubbles gas, like standing wine.
There, tradesman's niece, be silent, take the gold-
piece.

[*throwing his purse to her.*

Elsalil

I want no gold from you.

Sir Archie

Then let it lie.

[*He buttons on his gloves.*

Heaven only knows what folly mastered me.
I will not say that thou art hideous,
for, after all, that's not the point at issue.
Only, if I compare thee with that other

whose image my beclouded brain called up,
the error I have made is somewhat painful.

ELSALIL

'Tis not the first time I have seen you.

SIR ARCHIE

What then?
The whole of Sweden knows me.

ELSALIL

Let me think.
Surely I was long ill and lay unconscious?
Something came upon me. Help me. What was it?

SIR ARCHIE

Find it thyself.

ELSALIL

I cannot range my thoughts.

SIR ARCHIE

Mine are in order now.

ELSALIL

Oh sir, stay here.

SIR ARCHIE

For this time it is better so. Farewell!

[*He goes.* ELSALIL *follows him to the*

shop door. When he has disappeared, Torarin *and* Kathrin *appear.*

Elsalil

Do you know whom I have seen but now? Who was here?

Torarin

Thy speech thou hast recovered, Elsalil,
so it must have been a wonder-worker.

Kathrin

Jesus!

FIFTH SCENE

Night. Moonlight. On the flat ice of the sound. The galley of captain Frederik, ice-bound and covered with snow. TORARIN, *pulling his sledge comes over the ice. In the sledge sits pastor* ARNESOHN, *muffled up.*

TORARIN

[*while he halts, and slips off the towing rope.*

We're there, your reverence. This is the "Wild-flower,"
the galeasse of captain Frederik.

ARNESOHN

Thanks be to God! So, help me from the sledge.

TORARIN

Have you found the time hang heavy on you?

ARNESOHN

Nay;
when as a priest one bears the body of Christ
to a poor dying soul who asks for it,
much has to be examined in oneself
to make one fit and holy for the office.

Torarin

Your reverence, shall I hail the ship?

Arnesohn

Not yet
Wait but a little.—Tell me, Torarin,
in which direction lies the open rift?

Torarin

In a straight line beyond the stern of the ship.

Arnesohn

Where was it that you heard the echoing noise
of a whip cracking, and the sound of voices
urging a horse on?

Torarin

That was over there,
where the light winks. It's on the bowsprit
of a two-master.

Arnesohn

And on top of that
there came quite suddenly a hellish noise
from yonder, from the rift. Art still persuaded
the white horse with the booty and the murderers
slid o'er the edge into it and were drowned?

Torarin

The old white horse is drowned, most certainly;
else were it found by now. But whether
the robber band is dead? To-day I doubt it.

Arnesohn

That comforts me. God could not let them off
so cheaply, no, indeed, He could not do it.
I am a terrible sinner, Torarin.
The Host, the precious body of the Lord,
who said to us: Love ye your enemies!
rests here upon a breast that thirsts for vengeance,
and, if it cannot slake the thirst, will die.
Thou dost thyself believe they are alive.
Speak! What is it has altered thy opinion?

Torarin

Do you know this coin?

Arnesohn

Not I!—Perhaps: let me see it.

Torarin

[*has fished out a coin, shows it, and gives it up.*
A silver piece of foreign minting.

Arnesohn

Aye.

Torarin

Its twin is worn by Elsalil, my niece,
a talisman she got from pastor Arne.

Arnesohn

Who gave it thee? How came it in thy hand?
For surely it is from my father's treasure.

Torarin

A mercenary paid his drink with it.

Arnesohn

A Scot?

Torarin

Just so, a Scottish mercenary.

Arnesohn

Thou sayest the girl has found her speech again?

Torarin

Well, what she says is wild and incoherent;
it sounds confused, but yet she speaks, and has
besides fallen into strange and curious habits.
She sits and listens, and seems to be present
only in the body, her soul is far away;
and ever acts as if she looks for something,
which a higher will commanded her to find.

Arnesohn

Thou seest, then, that my prophetic soul
did not deceive me. She is God's instrument.
Look to her carefully.

Torarin

That is not easy;
she slinks out of the house, and scours the streets,
often whole days go by ere she comes home.

Arnesohn

Let her; that can be part of Heaven's plan.
Only you must find out exactly where

her favourite haunts are, and, above all else,
what is her business on her obscure journeys.
Now, give a hail, that we may have a ladder
let down to us. Oh, I could gnash my teeth.
"'Twas certainly no soldier" said the sheriff—
As often as my instincts led me to it,
yea, my suspicions!—the judge came down on me.
Give a call, we must be moving.

TORARIN

But listen, listen!

ARNESOHN

That's a star falling.

TORARIN

Are these not voices that
urge on a horse? Listen, the crack of whips!

ARNESOHN

Illusion.

TORARIN

No, but hark! Can't you hear the neighing?

ARNESOHN

Never was I a coward. If they came
hither by twos and threes I'd welcome them.
Only, I have my wits, and don't believe it.
Do thou as I do: disbelieve thy senses.
If I had faith in them, I had long been,
believe me, in a madhouse. But what's that?

TORARIN

A swarm of seagulls settling on the mast.

ARNESOHN

What is the matter with them?

TORARIN

Who can tell?

ARNESOHN

They fly in wild confusion, crying pitifully,
but yet it seems they follow something.

TORARIN

Or
they wait for something.—But now they take it up
into their midst.

ARNESOHN

What?

TORARIN

That I do not know.

ARNESOHN

A timid man would shudder at it, for
it's almost gruesome.

TORARIN

The Lord be merciful
to the poor soul the gulls are carrying off.

Arnesohn

How still it has become.

Torarin

[*calling.*

Ho, Frederik!

Ho, skipper Frederik! ahoy! ahoy!

[Frederik *appears on the deck of his ship, and looks down.*

Frederik

Ahoy! Who calls there?

Torarin

I do, Torarin!

Here is the pastor with the sacrament.

Frederik

The pastor comes too late, my wife is dead.

Torarin

Ahoy! What is it? Tell us once again.

Frederik

The pastor comes too late, she has passed away.

Arnesohn

Ask him when she died.

Torarin

When did she die?

Frederik

But now, when thou didst hail me, Torarin.

Torarin

Who can explain these things? You see, your reverence,
on what the gulls were waiting, what it was
that they took with them through the air of night.

Arnesohn

Now is his ship a coffin in the ice.—
Come, Torarin, we must climb up the side.

[Frederik *has let down a rope-ladder. He shines a lantern while* Arnesohn *and* Torarin *climb up on deck. When they have reached it all three disappear.—* Sir Douglas *and* Sir Donald *come slowly over the ice, dressed in the elegant and magnificent uniform of Scottish commanders.*

Sir Douglas

There, to the east, I tell you, lies the rift.

Sir Donald

You are mistaken, sir, most certainly.
I saw the black hole in the ice gape open
scarce thirty paces westwards, on the right.

Sir Douglas

Yours is the error, sir: impossible!

Sir Donald

Did you not hear the screaming of the seagulls?

Sir Douglas

Sir Donald, do not imitate Sir Archie:
we're not old women sitting at the distaff!
The rift is but a rift! And if a drake
splashes therein a little, and seagulls cry
in the air above, and ice cracks underneath,
that can disturb a coward, not a warrior.

Sir Donald

Well, well, Sir Douglas. You are right, I am,
ever since I saw the marten killing pigeons . . .
I am indeed since then a little fearful.
Also, I will confess to you, that moment
when we pushed in the sledge, the mare and all,
into the ice-hole, into the black water,
lives all too clearly still in my remembrance.

Sir Douglas

And the idea was your own, Sir Donald!
Almost alone you carried it out yourself.
No man has ever dared a bolder deed,
for under you, by God, the ice was breaking.
The shadow of your deed now makes you tremble.

Sir Donald

The shadow, yes, the shadow!

Sir Douglas

Noble colonel,
if you would rid yourself of it, 'tis bootless;
for cur as well as lord must throw a shadow.
And to that end you need not quicken step.

I sweat already underneath my coat;
although the night is cold, my head's afire.

Sir Donald

But I am freezing, freezing, sir, all over:
whereas the ice on which I walk appears
to me to be a glowing gridiron.
And why gainsay it? Away from here, away!
Here by the cliffs it is a purgatory,
and on the island Marstrand is a hell.
Where can we go until the ice breaks up?
If many a time one could know many a thing
beforehand, many a thing would stay undone.

Sir Douglas

Go seek a nursing sister, I am none.
Repentance is for him who has not sinned,
for me and every sinner it is useless.
To the devil with what always comes too late!
Did repentance ever come before the deed?
And when the deed is done, to paw it over,
idly to prate and mouth of what has happened;
what boots it, and why need we? Tell me that.
If I had always probed my conscience, sir,
I had never sprung ten shoe-lengths in a dance.—
What comes there o'er the ice? With your permission
we'll step aside a little in the shadow.

[*They withdraw into the shelter of the deep shadow thrown by the ship.*—Sir Archie *comes slowly towards them over the ice.*

Sir Donald

Sir Archie, by my troth! 'Tis but Sir Archie.

Sir Archie

[*shrinking back, and plucking at his dagger.*
Who speaks there?

Sir Douglas

If you're pondering sweet dreams,
so tell us, sir, and we'll not say a word.

Sir Archie

Why are you here, Sir Douglas and Sir Donald?

Sir Douglas

We seek a ship for Scotland, my dear sir.
We were directed from the brig o'er yonder
that lies fast frozen not far from the cliffs
towards this galeasse. The captain of it
unloads his cargo, so 'tis said, in Leith.
[*He calls up to the ship.*
Captain, captain!

Sir Archie

[*alarmed.*
Not so loud, Sir Douglas!

Sir Douglas

But this rotten boat lies silent, like a coffin;
and if I whisper, sir, think you perchance
the drunken sea-dog in her will wake up?

Sir Archie

Seek him by day, then, not by night. By God,
such folly as this will bring suspicion on us.

Sir Douglas

And in this land when is it day, Sir Archie?
For weeks now we have sniffed from ship to ship
whimpering like lapdogs without courage to bark.
Following your lead, when should we come to
Scotland?

Sir Donald

I quite agree with what he says, Sir Douglas,
you are too much inclined to lack precaution.

Sir Archie

Over yonder lies a ship, let us go thither.

Sir Douglas

That were a good two hours over the ice.
And when we finally got over there
we'd have the selfsame dance with you, Sir Archie,
that we have here, and that we've had for weeks.
Strengthen your little soul with brandy, here!
[*offering him the brandy-flask.*

Sir Archie

No more of your damned brandy, may God
curse it!

Sir Douglas

The accursed drop smacks rarely; I don't care
if it's hell-fire, it warms my body through.
He errs who says it is the root of evil.
The root of evil's in the stars, and fate
fulfils itself according as the planets

in heaven are inclined. What, then, are we
that we should take the blame upon our shoulders
for deeds that are allowed by God the Father
and set in motion by these heavenly bodies?
The devil himself stands at the grindstone: wild
the wicked stars shoot flaring through the night.—
Look there! and there! and there! See how they
shoot!
Shall I perhaps fall on the grinder Lucifer
and on his knife, when God himself won't do it?

Sir Archie

Sir Douglas, don't speak always of the grindstone!
What need to call up that accursed picture . . .

Sir Douglas

Believe me, you are much too sober, sir.

Sir Archie

True, true, in one respect I am too sober,
and would stay sober if I pumped myself
full to the neck of raw and fiery liquor.
Faugh! Who could put up prayer against it?
God . . .
I mean the God of vagabonds, and the God
of throatcutters! in short, the devil knows—
if this was ever sung me in my cradle
my old nurse never heard it, and much less
my mother and my father. I am shivering.
Lead's in my brain, and lead in all my bones.
If now the constable were to come, I'd put
the handcuffs on myself, and gladly go
to sleep for ever underneath the axe.

Sir Douglas

If I had to wish something for you, sir,
it would be the mad courage you have lost,
the wild gay courage that ever led us on.

Sir Archie

That was its ruin, so it came to stumble.

Sir Douglas

Courage remains erect, though the man stumbles.
A man who falls springs up, and afterwards
stands firm, and firmer than he ever stood.
I could wish . . .

Sir Archie

Only wish!—If wishes were
as much as blanks drawn in a lottery
I too would change my state by wishing. No,
irrevocable is the flight of time.
The wheels upon Life's waggon never turn
backwards upon their axles. Nevermore
shall I as driver stand at the cross-roads
on that spot where my horses broke away
and where the guiding reins fell from my hands.
Try it, sir, push the waggon back for me.
If you can do it, good; if not, then woe!

Sir Douglas

Well, you can do it, you grope backwards, sir!
I find no need to slink around crossroads.
What's over is no more. What's over, was!
What was, and is no more, has never been.
What do I care for what has never been?

Sir Archie

I grant that you are right. I envy you.
Call me a coward for ever, if you will.
What's to be done? You're healthy. I am poisoned.

Sir Douglas

If you are poisoned 'tis through idleness!
Once let the ice break and our feet be set
on the open sea, and you will soon be well.

Sir Archie

The poison would be always in my blood.
The poison, that makes me strange even to myself
Perhaps I could forget as much as you
had I not this dower of poison in my blood.

Sir Douglas

Now, by Saint James, what serpent was it stung you?
Where is the adder-bite—I cannot see it—
breeding the secret trouble that you look at?

Sir Archie

The adder-bite! A good guess, noble sir.
You come so near it that you make me wonder.
Do you not know that corpses bite? That they,
smacking their lips, themselves devour their shrouds,
even their own flesh, in their ravening hunger?
They rise again. They wander, walk about,
fall upon living folk, asleep or waking . . .

their bite brings madness . . . but one little bite
brings slow tormenting death upon the victim.

Sir Douglas

Did I believe in vampires, then mine were
a sorry case. Where could I find the nails
to nail them in their coffins? Have you not
slept often on battle-fields thick-sown with
corpses?
Have the dead e'er injured you but in a hair?

Sir Archie

Yes—No!—no! Yes, and yes!

Sir Douglas

Say when and where?
A case like that would give one much to think.

Sir Donald

I know quite well what's in Sir Archie's mind . . .
whom he is thinking of, and I shall tell you:
he means the maiden who but recently
runs after us.

Sir Archie

[*Starts and turns round.*
Where?—I did not understand you.
True, I will not deny she follows me,
not only through the streets in Marstrand,
but also in all places where she is not.
And if she were upon our track here too
in ice and night, by God, I would not wonder.

Sir Douglas

I wonder at nothing in the world, Sir Archie.
But that you hold a man-mad courtesan,
a whey-faced washer-girl who can be had
for less than for six groschen when you will
to be a vampire, that surprises me.

Sir Donald

Vampire here, or vampire there, Sir Douglas,
here is another circumstance of import.
She seems to be the resurrected image
not only of one whose death Sir Archie
can answer for, because his hand is sure,—
no, as I made quite certain yesterday,
she was the foster child of pastor Arne,
and is the other jade of that bloody night.

Sir Archie

Don't speak so loud; you've lost your senses, sir.

Sir Douglas

If what you say is true, then, deeds not words!
Entice the little vampire on the ice,
give her the finishing blow and send her packing:
and if you lack the courage, leave it to me
to send her after the old parson's horse
down to the chilly bottom of the sea.
There she may feed the fishes.

Sir Archie

Listen to me:
for every word I say is solemn truth
as were it sworn upon the Host. You know me.

Who murders more, or who so much as scratches
this maiden's skin, must answer for his life.
[*he goes away quickly.*

Sir Douglas

Is he gone mad? What has so altered him?

Sir Donald

We must keep a good watch upon him, sir.

Sir Douglas

I think he is besotted on the vampire.

Sir Donald

'Tis certain that he slinks about the fisher house
in which she dwells. And once he laid hands on
her
when she was sneaking after him, and dragged her
into his quarters with him.

Sir Douglas

Is that so?

Sir Donald

How can we tell the jade has not been schooled,
the monkey not been trained for catching gulls?
Perhaps the hussy's deputy for the halter
when but with naked arms she holds him fast.
That would concern us too.

Sir Douglas

It would, God knows.

Frederik

[*invisible from the deck.*
What do you want there down below? Hey, you!

Sir Donald

The devil, what is that? Who spies upon us?

Frederik

Give answer!

Sir Douglas

Show thyself first, man, where art thou?

Frederik

First I would like to know what your designs are!

Sir Douglas

That's easy told, you rascal: Our designs,
all three of them, are knightly coats of arms.

Frederik

There's three of you?

Sir Donald

[*aside.*
What stupid folly, sir!
Did we not make a rule that we should never
appear in public three of us together?

Sir Douglas

[*loudly.*
There's two of us! And what are our designs

thou knowest, now. What kind of cargo hast thou?

Frederik

Do you want to know that? 'Tis dried fish, for Leith!

Sir Douglas

God bless thee for it! We are three brave Scotsmen.

Sir Donald

[*aside.*

Two, two!

Frederik

You said two, are there three of you?

Sir Douglas

No: two! But there's a hundred Highlanders who seek with us a passage o'er to Scotland. Old sea-dog, canst thou take us on thy ship?

Sir Donald

By God, I'm going to cut and run, Sir Douglas.

Sir Douglas

The devil you are! And why?

Sir Donald

Look yonder, pray, why do they lower themselves down from the ship? I smell a rat, I'm going to decamp.

[*He goes off with long strides.*

Sir Douglas

[*running after him.*

Don't be a clown, sir! Now, then, for my sake . . .

[*Both knights have disappeared in the darkness. Pastor* Arnesohn, Torarin *and* Frederik *climb down the ship's ladder.*

Arnesohn

[*Arriving on the ground.*

Where are they?

Torarin

Gone!

Frederik

You saw them, as I did,
and heard them too, else would I say three devils
had lain in wait here for a dying soul
and fled in terror from your reverence.

Arnesohn

These were no spirits.

Torarin

These were no spirits. And know,
that I have heard the voices somewhere.

Frederik

I too, by God!

Torarin

And where? Both of us know it.

Arnesohn

At once to Bohus, Torarin, to the magistrate.
For what is more, the three of us can vouch for it,
we feel it clearly and with every pulse-beat:
the murderers live, they stood here on this spot.
Come, let us track their footsteps in the snow.

Torarin

Hush, hush! What can that be? Look there, your reverence!

[*Through the clear moonlight comes* Elsalil. *She seems rather to be feeling in the air, following an intuition, than to be looking for something with her eyes. She is scantily clothed, with only a thin short frock, and over her slim shoulders a scarf. Her hair hangs loosely down.*

Arnesohn

Oh, Torarin! Oh, what is that? Oh, oh!
What dost thou see? Ask me not what I see!

Torarin

Is it a poor and restless soul, that has
arisen from the grave?

Arnesohn

Berghild?

Torarin

But now
the tower-clock in Marstrand struck midnight.

Arnesohn

Berghild!

Frederik

No, it is Elsalil, thy niece.

Torarin

As I may hope for heaven, it is she!
What does she here? And whither goes she?

Arnesohn

Hush,
wake her not, for she sleeps! Don't speak to her.
Do you now mark yourselves what I have said?
By God, she has mysterious work to do
in the hard thankless service of requital.
Tender and fragile as she seems, our God
is strongest in the weak. He makes the child's foot
strong as the stroke of doom to crush his foes.
Woe to him whom she follows, and who sees her!
Her pointing finger brings the Day of Judgment,—
she nods, and the world trembles at God's footstool!

SIXTH SCENE

The bar-room in Torarin's *house. Night. The crying of gulls outside.* Sir Archie *and* Elsalil *enter cautiously from the shop.*

Sir Archie

Birds of the devil, be quiet; stop your noise!

Elsalil

Here is a step, take care, sir.

Sir Archie

Oh, I know.
Fate trips us up at every step we take.
Here is the place, then, where I saw thee first.

Elsalil

No, sir.

Sir Archie

No, sir? Thou didst but now affirm it.

Elsalil

I know of no time when thou wert not there.

Sir Archie

Well, let it be. As far as I'm concerned
I met thee for the first time in this room.

ELSALIL

I recognised thee. But I know not why.

SIR ARCHIE

Thou wert not in thy senses, wert not thyself.
I too was not myself, I say it frankly,
I was befuddled with too heavy drinking.
Thou sawest in me God knows what . . . someone
else,
and I in turn saw God knows whom in thee.

ELSALIL

Say not thou didst not see me!

SIR ARCHIE

And why not?

ELSALIL

No, do not say it! Else something grips my
throat,
and a dark mist rises before my eyes.

SIR ARCHIE

Only don't scream again, or I must go
to my regret as quickly as last time.

ELSALIL

No, stay!

SIR ARCHIE

I will, but check thy foolishness.
'Tis no concern of thine what image I see

when something makes me drunk as thou dost now.
So come to bed. And if I make thy lips
bleed in my frenzy, what does it mean to thee
whom I believe to kiss upon thy mouth?

Elsalil

Much does it mean. I know, too, who she is.

Sir Archie

Well, never mind. You are often as like as twins.
Many a time she visits me in thy absence.
So hast thou, too, a place within my dream.
In turn you drain the hot blood out of me.
And often you come together, both of you,
and force your way below my blanket, striving
to win my body's warmth, like freezing corpses
that change their gloomy bedsteads at midnight.
And truly I do love you then with ardour
unknown before, ye dead, accursed or blessed!
What shall I call you, ye who give me bodies
of an unearthly sweetness, and yet are nothing?
How you mingle your waves of saffron hair
and wrap me round in precious golden shadow!
And what warm clouds of fragrance you bestow
upon my nostrils from dream-laden cups
of the strangest blossoms!—Child, now let me go:
ecstasy has ravished me too far
and leaves me suddenly sober. I'll go home.

Elsalil

No!

Sir Archie

But I will!

Elsalil

[*bites* Sir Archie *in the hand.*

Sir Archie

[*in pain.*

Beast, art thou mad? What dost thou?
Let go! By God, I'm sweating! Help! No, wait,
my fingers are iron crowbars, and will break
thy head in two, madwoman, when I prise
thy jaws apart like this.

Elsalil

Now, who was that?

Sir Archie

Who else but thou?

Elsalil

I? Or was it the other,
who struggles from her snowed-up grave of nights
to visit thee in her bloody shroud?

Sir Archie

Ah well,
'tis all one who thou art, thou moonstruck witch!
And if thou'rt ridden by an incubus—
I am ridden by nine and ninety of them, and
each single one of them is twelve times stronger,
is twelve times more a hot and hell-brewed hound
than thine. Dost hear me? Think it over, child.
What now? What shall I do with thee? Kneel down!

Take thou the pale wave of thy flaxen hair
that loose and soberly flows from thy head,
and make a towel of it. Staunch my wound.
So. Kiss it now. I'll do the same for thee
in my own way: open a wound for thee
and close it. Good. Be quick, now, make thy bed.
Bleed me until I am as cold as ice,
drawing away with my infected blood
all the infected madness of my brain,
thy image, and that other one, for ever!

Elsalil

[*suddenly clear-sighted, screams.*
Murderer! Thou'rt pastor Arne's murderer!

Sir Archie

Well,
what does it matter? Thou wilt none the less
be at my beck and call. Come, come to bed.
But what was that?

Elsalil

Nothing, the garret stair!
It sometimes creaks at night so that one wakes.

Sir Archie

But I heard footsteps.

Elsalil

Where?

Sir Archie

Where is thy uncle?

Elsalil

My uncle Torarin is in Solberga.

Sir Archie

What is he doing there?

Elsalil

I do not know, sir.

Sir Archie

Liar! They're nosing round the blackened ruins.

Elsalil

What blackened ruins? Let me think it out.

Sir Archie

So that thou hatchest a new brood of phantasies,
callest me murderer again, and God knows what?—
Rather lay thou thy hand upon my forehead,
and scare the horror from me that falls on me.
Maiden, I love thee not, but, hear'st thou, help me.
Tell lies to me. Come with me, come to Scotland!
Tell me that thou art she who is no more,
call thyself by her name—what was her name?—
some time or other I heard the name of Berghild!
Call thyself Berghild! And if I abuse thee,
call thee a dog, and pile up curses on thee
in my heart's grief and hate, then laugh me down,
call me a fool, and say that thou art Berghild.
Swear to me that this knife did not remove
the world from me with one fell blow, and did not
murder myself most cruelly without killing me—
did not destroy my sight and the light of day.

Call thyself Berghild! Swear that thou art
Berghild!
And when the thaw-wind rushes on damp pinions
in triumph I'll bear thee to Scotland—oh!

[*he stretches himself stiff and loses consciousness.*

[Pastor Arnesohn *and* Torarin *enter noiselessly, and stand suddenly before* Elsalil.

Arnesohn

Who is this man?

Elsalil

I do not know.

Arnesohn

Tell me,
who is this man? By the cross of Jesus, tell me!
And what has happened to him?

Elsalil

I do not know.

Arnesohn

Thou'rt taciturn, Elsalil! Once more, who is
the man who lies as dead across the table,
and how, at midnight, did he come in here?

Torarin

Speak, Elsalil, 'tis no use to be obdurate,
refusing information. For thy goings
have been for long no secret to us.

Arnesohn

No!
Who is the man, and why does he lie here,
fuddled, with thee beside him?

Elsalil

I do not know.

Arnesohn

Good, good, thou dost not know, and so I thought.
Thou wilt be made to know upon the rack.
[*to* Torarin.
The judge has been informed. Go now to him,
and bring the constables back with thee. Make
haste.
No, wait a moment. Cords! We'll tie him up.

Elsalil

Sir Archie, sir, wake up! They're going to bind
you!

Arnesohn

Silence! Or else I will forget I am
a man of peace, and I will take upon me
myself to punish thee, thou prostitute!
[*to* Torarin.
Why dost thou tarry?

Torarin

Dare we bind him?

Arnesohn

And
why not?

Torarin

Because the man here is none else
than Sir Archie himself, if I am right,
and needs a doctor more than a constable.

Arnesohn

Sir Archie, himself, the Scottish colonel, he
of whom the song runs? He?

Torarin

Of whom 'tis said
he bore the wounded king out of the battle.

Arnesohn

He?

Torarin

Yes, it is he: I know him again.
He is it, girl. Deny it not. It is
the same man who was here already once.
But now I call to mind, your reverence,
much of what happened to the colonel then.
Singular!

Arnesohn

'Tis more than singular!

Torarin

Elsalil,
what did the gentleman do with thee that day?

Elsalil

I do not know.

Arnesohn

Plague take thy "do not know"!
True, thou hast suffered, and thy wits were knocked
out of the straight upon that night of horror.
Thou didst become a whore! And, though I grant
that dreadful horror may have been the cause
of the change and dislocation of thy spirit,
a higher law's at stake here, more's involved!
And so thy "do not know" infuriates me.
Yes, and I do not know whether thy sickness
is a pretence or not? Whether thou bindest
the mask of weakness on, only because
thou hast much more to hide than most men guess?
After all, art thou crafty? I do not know!
And didst thou know thy gallant secretly—
who knows? I do not know!—before the murder?

[Elsalil *slips out quickly.*

Arnesohn

Where has she gone to?

Torarin

Out of doors. Escaped!

Arnesohn

Thou wilt not tie the man up, Torarin?

Torarin

Your reverence, to lay a finger on him
means to destroy oneself. Besides, I am
only a poor man without influence.

Arnesohn

Thou hast not courage, then, to be a witness,
though thy suspicions light upon this man?

Torarin

Leave me a little time, your reverence.
for he who brings suspicion on a gentleman
as great as this, is like to lose his head.

Arnesohn

Well, thou art timid. Go! Into my hand
has God delivered him. And may my hand
be palsied ere it lets him go. I'll look
into his eyes, I'll probe him to the heart
sharply and shortly. If I find a doubt
then he shall live. But if my heart declares
"'tis he, one of thy father's murderers!" then,
he shall not live, and then no legal process
dragging its slow length out will take from me
and from God's vengeance this great gentleman.
Then between him and me the law will run
"an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and I
will demand the settlement of my account
in the very white of his great knighthood's eye.
Now go! He stirs! Go, leave us both alone.

[Torarin goes. Sir Archie *stirs, opens his eyes, and gazes fixedly at the parson.*

Sir Archie

Who speaks here?

Arnesohn

I shall ask the selfsame question,
who speaks here?

Sir Archie

Who is speaking?

Arnesohn

Sir, I am!
And how came you by night into this room?

Sir Archie

[*to some extent pulling himself together.*
Be good enough to tell me where I am.
It seemed to me that I was in a cemetery.

Arnesohn

Who filled this cemetery where you were?

Sir Archie

Death filled the cemetery, as he always does.

Arnesohn

Death is not only lord of every man,
to many he's a servant also.

Sir Archie

True.

Arnesohn

To whom was Death a servant then when he
filled up the cemetery of Solberga?

Sir Archie

The cemetery of Solberga?

ARNESOHN

Yes.

SIR ARCHIE

That was the very one from which I came.

ARNESOHN

Then tell me, sir, what was your business there?

SIR ARCHIE

I dug out of the grave a dead young maiden.

ARNESOHN

And was the dead young maiden Berghild?

SIR ARCHIE

Yes.

ARNESOHN

It seems we are at one with "yes" and "yes."
Perhaps your honour can inform me further
of others who are sleeping at Solberga
and cry aloud for vengeance in the earth?

SIR ARCHIE

I heard them.

ARNESOHN

Then you have good ears, it seems.

Sir Archie

It is not necessary to have ears
in order to hear the wailing of the graves.

Arnesohn

And so one does not need to use one's eyes
to see an aged man of ninety years
bedabbled with blood, standing upon his grave-
mound
calling for vengeance from the nightly skies.

Sir Archie

Are you the dead man?

Arnesohn

No, I am his son.

Sir Archie

Wait.

[*He lifts the light and shines it close into the parson's eyes.*

Arnesohn

Do you recognise me?

Sir Archie

Wait! Perhaps.
Magic! The world is full of magic, truly!

Arnesohn

Full of black sin and crime.

Sir Archie

[*contemptuously.*
What do you know?
These are the eyes of a dead man.

Arnesohn

Indeed!

Sir Archie

The brow, the chin, the nose of a dead man,
but horribly degenerate, most repulsive.

Arnesohn

God sees the heart.

Sir Archie

If your name's Arnesohn
you have something in you that comes near to me.

Arnesohn

Hear word for word: my name is Arnesohn.

Sir Archie

Good.

Arnesohn

Neither good for me nor good for you.

Sir Archie

This is a curious dungeon where we meet
for the first time. For there's a golden summit,

it seems to me, afar, untenanted,
on which we had much better found each other.

Arnesohn

Thou deniest nothing?

Sir Archie

By God, I deny nothing.

Arnesohn

Nothing deniest thou? Say it once more.

Sir Archie

Far,
worlds far away from me is all denial.

Arnesohn

Then, bloodhound, say thy final paternoster!

Sir Archie

[*awaking, springs back with the adroitness of a panther.*
Thou art too hasty, stay! Ten paces distance!
[*The wind has already increased during this last set-to, and bagpipe music can be heard. It comes nearer, accompanied by the cheers and hurrahs of a crowd. It is the Highland regiment marching past. Suddenly the shop door is wrenched open, and* Elsalil *rushes in. Not long after her follows* Torarin.

Elsalil

The ice is breaking in the sound, Sir Archie.
A thawing wind! The sea is opening up,
the sea, the sea is opening up, Sir Archie!
And the whole Scottish regiment is behind me,
Sir Douglas and Sir Donald at their head.

Arnesohn

I have yet time, I will not run away.

Sir Archie

Nor I. But yet I smell a rat. Hear, thou,
is this a snare that thou didst set for me?

Elsalil

What do you mean?

Sir Archie

Dost know the people here?
Thou hast summoned them, delivered me to them.

Elsalil

I summoned the regiment, but not these others,
the regiment, Sir Donald and Sir Douglas.

Sir Archie

Thou liest!

Arnesohn

She does not lie: she's so degenerate
that what she tells you is the very truth.

She brings on me a regiment, on me,
on one who stands alone and on his rights.
In spite of that: you are a knight!—a blood-hound
but yet a knight—and you will not conceal
yourself behind a woman's petticoat.
And I am sixty: you are far from forty.
To-night you'll put yourself at my disposal,
man against man, the young against the elderly.
You will not cower before the man of peace,
you, the war-hero!—like a frightened schoolboy
that cowers before a caning. I'll await you
beside the galeasse of captain Frederik;
you can be easily directed thither.
Do you understand me, I shall wait for you!
You will not like a despicable cur
sneak off in cowardly fashion when the ice breaks.
By God, you will not be a snivelling coward!
If you're afraid you may be sick or faint
or seized with weakness, in a word, with cowardice,
I'll bring my smellingsalts for all emergencies!

Sir Archie

Await me.

[*The pastor goes quickly away.* Torarin *follows him.* Sir Douglas *and* Sir Donald *dance in,* Sir Douglas *playing the bagpipes. Dancing Highlanders throng behind them.*

Sir Donald

We have looked for you, Sir Archie;
we sent out people through the whole of the town
without success. At length the maiden came,
and then, by God, a load fell off my spirit.

On board! on board! They say the ice is breaking.
Now comes the spring into a new life, sir.

Sir Archie

Who springs, look that he stumbles not.

Sir Douglas

Hurrah!
I smell a roast of mutton, I taste Scotland.
To the sea! to the sea! Now, gentlemen, on board!

SEVENTH SCENE

Beside Captain Frederik's galeasse. Gray dawn. Wind. TORARIN *and pastor* ARNESOHN. *The pastor walks restlessly up and down.* TORARIN *stands near his sledge.*

TORARIN

Your reverence!

ARNESOHN

Well?

TORARIN

Were I not certain that
you would rebuke me if I were to say
what now is hovering upon my tongue,
I'd like to give you some advice.

ARNESOHN

Speak on.

TORARIN

The day is breaking. We have waited here
the whole night through, and still he has not come.
One could suppose that Heaven does not approve
of what you want to do, and does not will it.
If that is so, 'twere better to go home.

Arnesohn

Of that I will hear nothing, Torarin.
Until the last hope that he'll keep his word
has vanished, I shall stay upon this spot.
The ship still sits fast bound and motionless
in the ice of the bight, and waits upon the Scots.
Till now not one of them has come in sight.

Torarin

The bight is frozen, the ice there holds out longest.
But yonder there's been open sea for hours . . .
the murderers feel the ground burn underfoot . . .
If you ask me, I almost think they have
long since taken ship into the open water,
and now are voyaging far out at sea.

Arnesohn

Then, truly, I'd have nothing but my curse
to fling at their accursed ship. But still,
what thou conjecturest I do not believe.

Torarin

Will it not turn out better in the end
if God has snatched them from our human vengeance
reserving them for his, which is much worse,
and which they cannot scape? You have a wife,
and you have children. Who can tell if crime
may not again be victor in your duel?
making your wife a widow, your children orphans?

Arnesohn

As long as I perform this office, man,

which Fate has thrust inviolably on me,
I have a higher matter to consider
than wife and child. My name is Arnesohn,
Arne the Strong was father to me, the parson,
who was a mighty warrior of God.
The old adventurous blood wells up in me
stronger than I am, crying out for vengeance.
My father was assassinated, butchered,
he asks for vengeance, he cries out for vengeance
so loudly that it thunders in my ear:
"Avenge me and thy mother and thy daughter!
If God in thee awakes not the avenger,"
so calls the thunder-voice of pastor Arne,
"who will lift up his hand against the three
honourable hell-hounds, the three noble knights,
Sir Archie, and Sir Douglas, and Sir Donald?"
Yea, who, if not myself? I ask it too.
The answer's "no one." What of legal justice?
She shrinks, and ties the bandage o'er her eyes.
She sees not, since she is too weak to punish.
She simulates deafness, though the evil deed
cries out so horribly to heaven that
her blood is frozen. Therefore I say to thee,
the knight will come. God must entrap for me
the haughty Satan in my net. I felt it
in prayer, as I wrestled ardently
with the Almighty for that very boon,
that he has been delivered into my hands.

[Frederik *has climbed down the ladder and comes to them.*

Frederik

Your reverence, come on board with me and warm yourself.

ARNESOHN

This is no time for that. And when it is time,
then, perhaps, you will shrink from me with horror,
for then perhaps I'll be a corpse, or else
an executioner who has done his work.

FREDERIK

Oh, come aboard with me, dear sir, come with us.
It is in vain you wait. And if it were not,
you ought to come on board the ship with me.

ARNESOHN

You think that I am mad—O, you are wrong.
I am more calm and clear than ever I was.
David, though he was small, o'erthrew Goliath,
who was a giant, because God was on his side.
True, I am not a Samson like my father,
but Samson's spirit is in me. Enough!

FREDERIK

Sir, let yourself be warned, for there are troops
of Scots advancing o'er the ice from Marstrand.

ARNESOHN

Where are they?

FREDERIK

If you listen, you can hear
through the dull cracking of the distant ice
the bagpipes of the regiment screeching hither.
Believe me, all that mob of men are drunk,
raving with joy because the sea breaks up,
and not to be kept under in their wildness.

Arnesohn

I can hear nothing. Stay! The tower clock
in Marstrand—yes, and mutterings of a storm
that drives across the yellow morning sky.
I will not budge an inch, man, come what may.

Torarin

Now, God be thanked, the time is up at last.
The sun is rising. 'Tis o'er the cliffs already.
I can breathe freely now this night is over.

Arnesohn

But I, I cannot: a weight lies on my breast.—
By my immortal soul, who's coming there?

Torarin

It is a Scot.

Frederik

A Scottish colonel!

Arnesohn

Wait!

[Sir Archie *can be seen advancing. He walks slowly, feeling his way. Often he stands still, listens, and turns round. He speaks and acts, when he comes nearer, as if* Arnesohn, Frederik *and* Torarin *were not there.*

Frederik

Be prudent, sir, and climb aboard with me.

Arnesohn

No, wait! I want to find out who it is.

Frederik

'Tis a great gentleman, a Scottish colonel.

Arnesohn

Dost recognise him?

Frederik

Possibly it is he:
but it might be Sir Donald, or Sir Douglas.

Arnesohn

Do you see others with him?

Torarin and Frederik

Nobody!

Arnesohn

Then who else can it be, if he is alone?
Look sharply at him, carefully, Torarin.
Thou sawest him by day, I by night only.
Well?

Torarin

Sir, it is he: I had not believed it!

Arnesohn

You see, there is a God in heaven. Good!—
We were peasants before we were priests,
and before we were peasants we were pirates
upon the sea. An ancestor of mine

was Leif, the son of Erik, a Norman, who
sailed o'er the dark sea many a time to Greenland.
How does it come that half-forgotten stuff
runs all at once so quickly through my head?
Greet those I leave behind me, if I fall.
What else to do, ye know. Bury my corpse.—
But what is it he's doing?

Torarin

He lifts a stone up,
and makes as if to throw it.

Arnesohn

Who is behind him?

Torarin

I can see no one, and yonder where he is
in the middle of the ice there are no stones.

Arnesohn

He stoops again—surely he threw a stone.

Sir Archie

[*shrieks dreadfully into the direction from which he came. It echoes, muffled by distance.*

She-cur!

Arnesohn

What is he crying?

Sir Archie

She-cur!

Arnesohn

Again!

Frederik

He's throwing stones at a beast which is not there.

Arnesohn

Perhaps a wolf?

Frederik

It sometimes happens, at night, that one howls round the ship. But it is broad day.

Sir Archie

She-cur.

Arnesohn

Now I have caught it, he was calling "she-cur."

Torarin

'Tis strange.

Frederik

There flies another stone.

Sir Archie

[*breaks into insane laughter.*

Arnesohn

Can he be drunk, or does he merely think
to fool us?

Frederik

He has some design or other.
Come aboard with me.

Arnesohn

Not I! Not now or ever!

Torarin

What has he tied around his hand?

Frederik

A cloth.
One would imagine that his hand is bleeding.

Torarin

What kind of an unnatural light is this?
As if the world were changed into a hell,
everything is so sulphurous. Is perhaps
the Last Day come?

Arnesohn

Utterly credible!

Sir Archie

[*calling.*
Ho,
what are you doing there in deep night? Ho, you there!

Arnesohn

'Tis day. The sun has driven away the night,
and you stand there uncovered in your sin.

Sir Archie

[*calling.*

Who prates there?

Frederik

You are tempting God! Come with me.
A naked blade is gleaming in his hand.

Arnesohn

[*drawing a knife.*

And in mine here its fellow.

Frederik

Climb on board,
he's coming straight with mighty springs upon us,
else we are dead men.

Sir Archie

[*close upon the three of them.*
Who goes there?

Torarin

A friend.

Sir Archie

I am bound for pastor Arne's, at Solberga.

Arnesohn

What to do there?

Sir Archie

Confess! By the body of God!

Frederik

If you're bound thither, in the distance, see,
between the cliffs, there lies the parsonage.
The church-tower of Solberga can be seen.

Sir Archie

There? Where?

Frederik

No, yonder.

Sir Archie

Yonder lies the ice-rift?

Arnesohn

Where you pushed horse and sledge into the water together.

Sir Archie

What's that you say?

Arnesohn

Am I not right?

Sir Archie

[*whistles and sways at the hips. Suddenly.*
Ha! That reminds me. Do you know anywhere an apothecary?

Arnesohn

I am one myself
in my own parish now and then, yes, even
a doctor when there's need.

Sir Archie

Do you know a remedy
against the mad bite of a dead she-cur?—
There, she has come again! Wait, wait a moment.
[*He takes a step forward, lies in wait, picks up an imaginary stone and hurls it in the direction from which he came.*
Dead! What one loves must die, be dead, dead, dead!—
Ha, ha, ha, ha! That hit her: see, she limps!
So you, you know a remedy for dog-madness.
Here is the bite: do you want to see it?

Arnesohn

Certainly!

Sir Archie

What is your name?

Arnesohn

My father's.

Sir Archie

Good! That's good.
Now, here it is, see. Here you have the wound.

Arnesohn

I think it small.

Sir Archie

And you?

Frederik

I, too.

Sir Archie

And he there?

Torarin

I'm of the mind it is not very big.

Sir Archie

And yet there is no hope, for I am mad,
am mad, am mad, am mad!—Well, fare ye well,
the pastor Arne's waiting.
[*he goes on, calm and proud.*

Arnesohn

Do you mark
something, my friends?

Frederik

Within these hollow eyes
sits madness.

Arnesohn

Dies irae, dies illa!
Yes, justice was remiss, but yet the hand
of God has reached him. Lord God, Thou art great
in Thy mysterious ways, which I begin
to guess at. Mine is vengeance, saith the Lord.

Sir Archie

[*coming back as if he had forgotten something.*
Listen! There's something else I'd like to ask.

I am a Scottish noble. I would go
home. I would charter three ships crowned with
wreaths
to take me home. Why are you silent?

Frederik

Three?

Sir Archie

Covered with wreaths of flowers from stem to stern.
I am conducting my dead bride to Scotland.—
I'm done for.

Frederik

What do you mean by that?

Sir Archie

Quite simple.
For me it is too dark here.

Frederik

But the sun
shines bright in the bright morning heaven.

Sir Archie

Where?

[*He looks up with wide staring eyes straight into the sun.*

Arnesohn

Truly, revenge is taken from my hand
by the Almighty. See but how he hungers
for light, in the middle of light that knows him not,
and lets him pine away for lack of it.

No pity! Thanks to Heaven!
[*stepping forward, loudly.*
Thou, murderer,
now but a broken vessel, but a fragment
of potshard thrown away. Poor nobleman
and bloodhound! Fallen from the high estate
of transitory fame. From the highest rank
of earthly birth sunk lower than the low.
Hear me: thou art for ever accursed, accursed!
[*in the distance the sound of bagpipes.*

Sir Archie

[*enraptured.*
Who speaks there? O, I hear the sweetest sounds—.
Why hast thou tears so trembling on thy lashes,
my lovely maiden, and why dost thou hearken
in the wintry light?

Torarin

He does not hear, he's senseless.

Arnesohn

Thou art for ever, for ever accursed, accursed!

Sir Archie

[*enraptured.*
Ah, now I hear it too, it is the bagpipes
my sweetheart, of the valiant Scots, my comrades.
The brave and gallant boys are going home.
And the bagpipes are wailing like a child
that hungrily feels for its mother's breasts
that are not there. But how the gallant rascals

are dancing and are rocking their own cradles
with laughing countenances, that shall hide
the whimpering in the bottom of their hearts!

Frederik

Your reverence, they're advancing at the quick-
step,
with beating drums. For the last time, on board!

Arnesohn

They are still distant, I still have time for action.
Sir, do you know me?

Torarin

He does not see you.

Arnesohn

But
he shall see me, even if he were born blind.

Sir Archie

Hark, does it not sound like the crying now
of tender lambs, of innocent kids? Like flocks!
These are the flocks of our green highlands.
Would
I were myself a shepherd, my sweet child,
and thou my shepherdess, and that we turned
passionately in the circling dance together,
to the music of that wild and ardent wailing!

Arnesohn

Who am I? Dost thou know me?

[SIR ARCHIE *has begun to dance to the music of the approaching regiment. The Scots can now be seen. In front of them dance* SIR DOUGLAS *and* SIR DONALD.

SIR ARCHIE

[*suddenly stoops again, and throws an imaginary stone.*

Cur! Thou she-cur!
I felled her dead. But there she is again.
She betrayed me, and betrayed Berghild too.

SIR DOUGLAS

Do we find you here, sir?

SIR ARCHIE

No.

SIR DONALD

Do we find you here, sir?

SIR ARCHIE

I tell you no!

SIR DOUGLAS

Hardly a thousand paces
from here a harlot lies dead in the snow.
A wolf has torn her: much good may it do him.

SIR DONALD

Up, up, up, up, Sir Archie! Here is brandy.
Don't stutter and babble like a baby there!

Your mother does not know how it goes with you.
She lies in the grave, and will not turn to see.
Make ready to go, now. Go!

[Sir Donald *puts himself into position for the game of leap-frog. With an elastic bound* Sir Archie *springs up of his own accord and leaps over* Sir Donald's *back, his legs spread wide. He then bends down, and* Sir Douglas *springs over him. Then* Sir Donald *over* Sir Douglas, *and so on, as in the courtyard at Branehoek.*

Sir Douglas

You see, we are
a jolly three-leaved clover, high jumpers: Hecht,
Iltis and Marder are our names. My brother
has white hair and red eyes. And we devour
live rabbits, if by luck they come our way.

[*The pipers play more wildly than ever. The Scots dance, and cheer on their commanders.*

Torarin

Now I will swear to it upon the Host:
they're pastor Arne's murderers.

Arnesohn

[*advancing with clenched fists.*
Murderers! Murderers!

[Douglas, Donald *and their soldiers break into uncontrollable laughter.*

Sir Douglas

Roar once again, old bawler, dost thou hear?

Torarin

You're pastor Arne's murderers! Murderers! Murderers!

[*renewed and incessant laughter of the soldiers. To music and dancing they all go off, except* Sir Archie, *who stands upright, motionless, rigid, with head uplifted.*

Sir Douglas

[*voice.*

Where are you, sir? Come with us.

Sir Archie

No!

Sir Donald

[*voice*

Come with us.

Sir Archie

No! No!

[*he collapses as if struck by lightning, and dies.*

Arnesoihn

What's happened now?

Torarin

He has collapsed.
Was he struck by an invisible lightning-flash?

Arnesohn

[*coming nearer*

By the Almighty God, it seems so! He is dead!
But O, ye men, meseems that it was not
the Avenger's lightning that so struck him down.
How wonderful! It was his own "No! No!"
with which he checked for ever his own step
and destiny's step as well. 'Twas that, believe me.
It involved destiny, involved his life,
the next breath that he drew, his heart's next beat:
and in that moment everything stood still
as this tremendous "No" was brought to birth
within a human soul. Amen, amen!
Here lies a conqueror . . . here lies
a man redeemed, friends!—and where is my foe?

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